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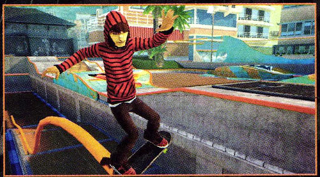

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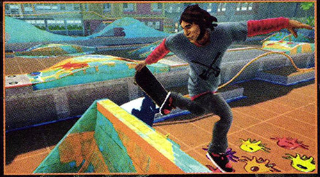
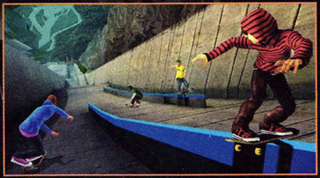
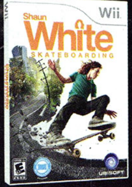


Morph Terrain.



Skate With Friends.



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Wii™

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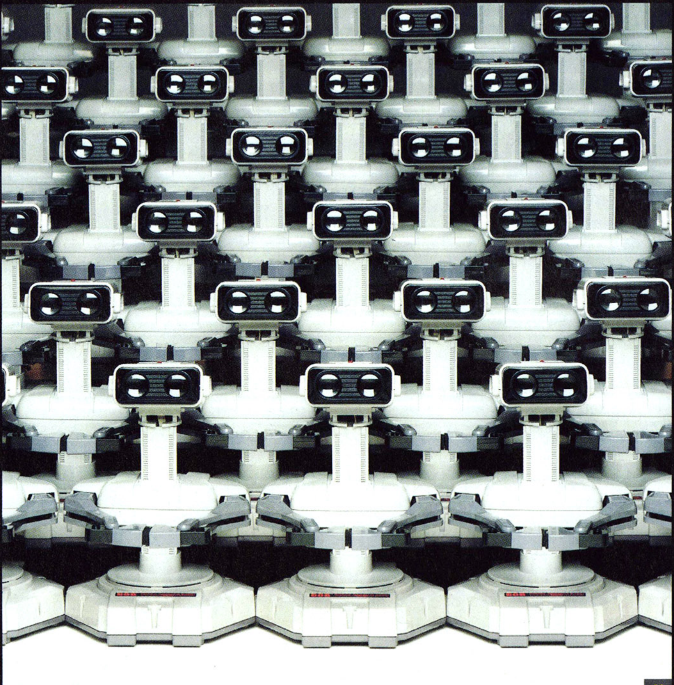
The Nintendo Entertainment System turns 25, and we're celebrating with the help of some of the most renowned creators in gaming. Revisit the games, the hardware, the accessories, and everything else that made the NES into a cultural icon.

Pretty in Pink 70
If you think you know Kirby, think again. Kirby's Epic Yarn for Wii offers an all-new take on the beloved character, and we've got plenty of new screens and details.

Still Golden 74
One of the biggest names in first-person shooters is back! Here are 007 reasons why you should get excited about the Wii revival of GoldenEye 007.



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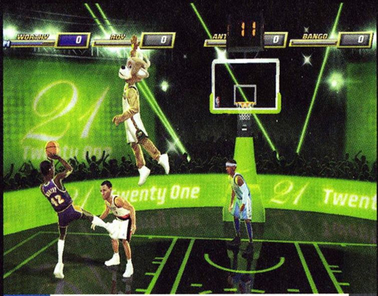

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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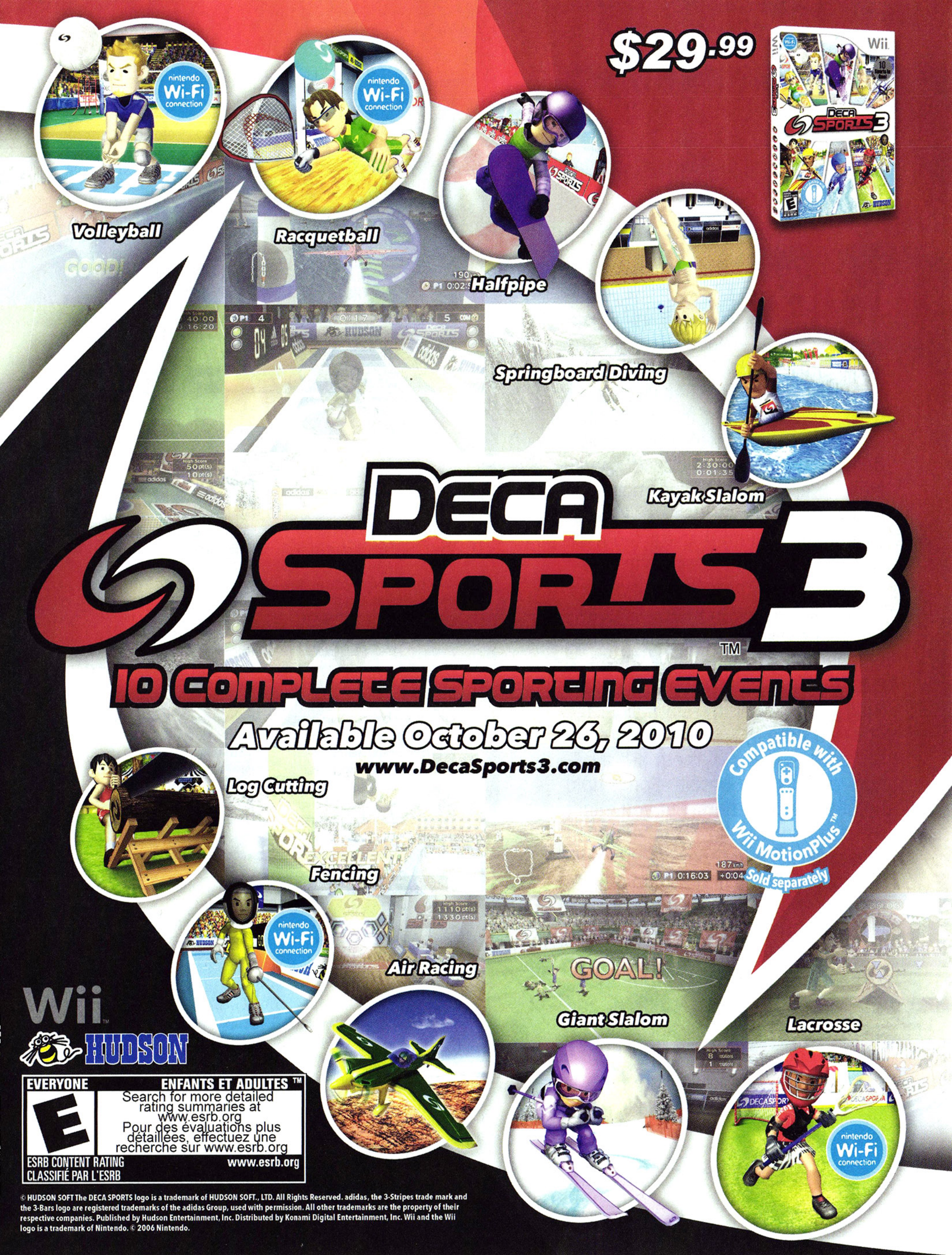
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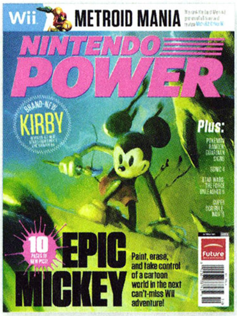
Pulse

The Past Is a Blast

Chris Slate

What a labor of love the last few weeks have been. Few things make me as misty-eyed as NES nostalgia, and we've been knee-deep in the console's classic games while preparing our ginormous 26-page tribute to the silver anniversary of the system that started it all. And the best part is, we didn't do it alone. We got to geek out over our favorite games with many of today's top game creators, some of whom helped make our favorite NES titles. Even if you weren't around during the 8-bit glory days, I strongly encourage you to try the NES games featured in our article; many of them are available on Virtual Console. Some hold up better than others, but you might be surprised at how fun many of these decades-old classics can still be. Some hold up better than others, but you might be surprised at how fun many of these decades-old classics can swtill be, such as the original installments of Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, Metroid, and many other timeless franchises. So read on, enjoy, and don't forget—now you're playing with power!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**



V259 OCTOBER 2010

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while reminiscing with R.O.B. But first, this month's special letter request: in honor of the coming holiday season, create a new holiday around a Nintendo character or other Nintendo-related subject, and describe how you would celebrate it. Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

Worlds Collide

Why doesn't Nintendo make an MMO? Players could create their own character based on different game series, choosing between a human, a Hylian, a space bounty hunter, etc. The world could be endless! You could combine such zones as the Mushroom Kingdom, Donkey Kong's jungle, Hyrule, and Kirby's Dream Land—just think of the endless zones in each one of them. You could travel on Epona or Yoshi, and fight in Mushroom Kingdom sewers, Metroid caves, and dungeon areas like Bowser's castle. I think you see the opportunity! —**DREW**

Sounds awesome! Once, I'd have said that I can't imagine all of Nintendo's worlds fitting together and coexisting in the same game, but after Nintendo achieved just that with the Subspace Emissary mode of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, anything seems possible.

Powered Up!

I've never paid much attention to the News section of the magazine. Since you guys changed it to the new Power Up design, however, I've read that section first, even before Reviews, which is one of my favorite sections. Thanks for making the magazine even more awesome! —**LUIGILOVER**

Get the Power!

An online video caught my eye the other day—it was an old Nintendo Power TV commercial. I watched it so many times that I have the lyrics memorized:

Get the Power!
Nintendo Power.
Get the clues that you can use,
Nintendo Power!
Higher and higher,
Fighting your way through enemy fire!

I just wanted to show my devotion to Nintendo Power. Thanks, guys!

—**ADAM M.**

I'll be honest—I didn't know that commercial existed. What a... um...catchy tune! Maybe we should update it to make it a little more 21st-century. Anyone want to take a stab at it?

Is It the Shoes?

Have you ever really thought about why Sonic is so fast? I mean, he wears those red shoes everywhere he goes.... What if his superspeed is all in his footwear? —**MR. MAN**

Wow—if true, this could be a scandal to rival Mario's rumored mushroom use at the Olympic Games!

From the best boss to the best game, Nintendo Power picks the highlights of the epic Metroid series.
ULTIMATE METROID
Metroid II: Return of Samus
8
Metroid Prime Hunters
9

Great feature on the Metroid series, but you didn't include the newest game in your rankings! If you were to redo the list today, where would you put Other M? **—BO RIDLEY**

Good question! Now that I've finished the game and had a few weeks to let it soak in, I'd say that, for me, Metroid: Other M ranks somewhere around the middle of the franchise. I'm tempted to say that I like it more than the Metroid Prime trilogy, but since I personally prefer the series as a side-scroller, I'm heavily biased. (Sorry, first-person fans!)

No Tights?!

I generally have very few complaints where Zelda games are concerned, but I was ever so slightly disappointed to see Link wearing pants in Skyward Sword. I mean, pants? I'm sure I'm not the first to feel that canon has been slighted, but perhaps a small percent of that disappointment is due to the relative lack of male eye candy in video games. **—SHE WHO PREFERRED TIGHTS**

I kind of dig the pants, but maybe that's just my male point of view. Hmm, maybe I can better relate if I imagine Samus in baggy clothes instead of her Zero Suit.... Gah! How *dare* you, Nintendo!

Super R.O.B.

I'd really like to see a new version of R.O.B. for Wii. It could be called Super R.O.B. and be white and blue to match the console, and it could come with its own Wii Channel to interact with. This R.O.B. would be more flexible (like he was in Super Smash Bros. Brawl), and it would even dance! This would be a great way to introduce an old classic to new players. **—NINTENDO-FREAK247**

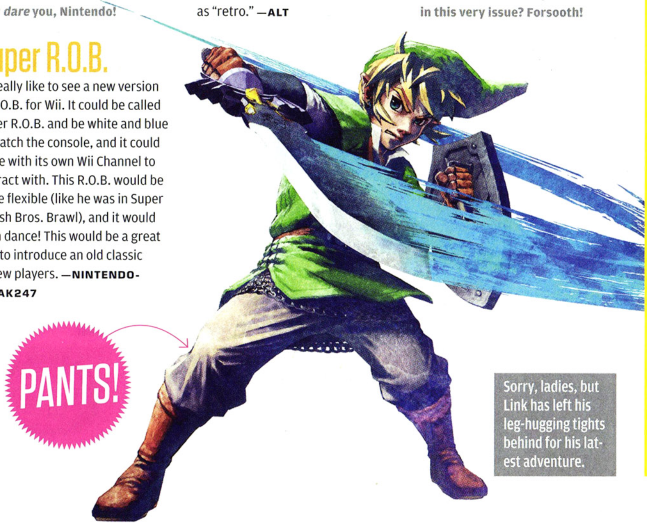
Retro or Lazy?

These days, lots of games seem to be vying to be as authentically retro as they can be, and usually, this is truly a great thing. But I can't say the same for many Nintendo DS RPGs such as the recent Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light. In these cases, it's more like a race to bring back as many inconveniences as possible; the things that kept so many players away from 8-bit RPGs in the first place. A minimal seen-it-all-before story might be fine in Contra 4, but an RPG needs more than that to draw you in. Sometimes I feel like lazy game designs are passed off as "retro." **—ALT**

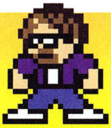
Playback Praise

One of the things that I always look forward to whilst reading an issue of your magazine is the Playback article. I was born in 1995, you see, and as a teenager, I've always felt like I was meant to live in the 1980s, what with my love for classic gaming. Thusly, I have made it my goal to learn all that I can about the retro gaming universe. Playback articles help me in said mission, so I just wanted to say thanks! **—JASON H.**

Thou art welcome, friend Jason! Verily, we art glad to be of service. Mayhap thou shalt enjoy our NES 25th-anniversary celebration in this very issue? Forsooth!



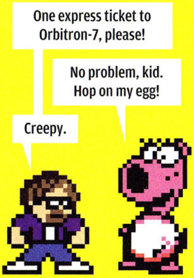
Sorry, ladies, but Link has left his leg-hugging tights behind for his latest adventure.



DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hey, Nintendo Power, what if your magazine had a comic strip each month based on Nintendo? It would be easy and the whole staff could chip in. Don't ya think? **—ALEX L.**

The Hoff says: Nintendo Power has actually featured comics based on a wide variety of games over the years, so your idea may have some merit. As long as the NP staff could come up with something decent, that is....


One express ticket to Orbitron-7, please!
No problem, kid. Hop on my egg!
Creepy.

On second thought, I'm pretty sure this ain't gonna work.

When my parents picked up the NES, I was a bit too young to play, so they would put me to bed early to play Mario. There's nothing like falling asleep every night to star music and Mario sound effects! I blame them for my Nintendo obsession. —**DREW**

Describe your very first encounter with an NES.

When I was six years old, I would go to my babysitter's house each day to eat breakfast before school. One day, while the other kids there ran to the sugar-coated cereals, I spotted an NES and started playing The Legend of Zelda. I was so excited!

I was shown how to play the game as other kids gathered around to watch. I played for the duration of my stay, right up until I had to get on the school bus. I can't describe how much fun I had telling all the kids at school about the NES and Zelda. They were amazed and so was I. That day changed my life forever, because from then on, it's been all Nintendo, all the time for me. —**CHRIS G.**

I first encountered an NES because of the Sega Master System. A friend of mine owned the Master System, and I just had to have it! When I received an NES for Christmas instead, I was devastated! But the moment I collected my first mushroom and stomped on that first Goomba, I knew I was playing with power! —**MR. TESTAWICH**

I am new to the NES, but the first time I tried my uncle's system, I was blown away! Something about the simplicity of the games makes me not want to put the controller down. Just think: all of today's games evolved from this groundbreaking console.

—**DRAGON BALL DUDE45**

Back around '86 or '87 I was weaned off what was then my favorite thing in the whole wide world—the Atari 2600—by the NES. Atari arcade ports like Space Invaders and Centipede were quickly replaced with heavy daily doses of Super Mario Bros. and Duck Hunt, soon followed by Final Fantasy and The Legend of Zelda. I still have a soft spot for the ol' Atari, but the day that I was given my NES was the day I truly became a hardcore gamer.

—**LYNN R.**

When a boy in my class brought in an NES game insert one day, I was amazed at the screens of all the games that it showed. So, I went home and told my mom that my dad wanted a Nintendo Entertainment System for his birthday. Sure enough, he opened his gift on his birthday and looked confused. I piped up, "Dad, look—it's just what you wanted!" Both my parents laughed and I was off to play Duck Hunt and Gyromite. —**ERIC C.**

When I was a kid, my parents showed their old NES to my siblings and me. That was my introduction to video games, and it was amazing. We would play Super Mario Bros., Duck Hunt, The Legend of Zelda, Marble Madness, and Dr. Mario up in my parents' room on this little TV. But then we each got a Game Boy Advance SP, and later, my brother got a GameCube. The NES became a forgotten memory, and stayed buried in the basement for a long time. When I read your special question for Vol. 258—"describe your first encounter with an NES"—I immediately remembered the fun days of classic gaming and headed down to the basement, found the dusty old cardboard box, and carried it upstairs. I untangled countless wires, plugged the machine into the wall, and crossed my fingers as I pressed the Power button. I smiled wide when I heard the oh-so-familiar theme from The Legend of Zelda. Thanks for reminding me that you just can't beat the classics. —**KATE**

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

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of you wish today's titles were as challenging as NES games

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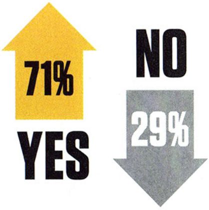
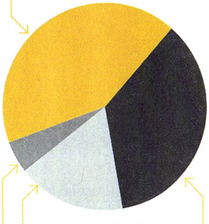


Which game was the best NES sequel?

SUPER MARIO BROS. 2



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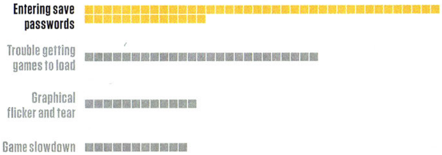

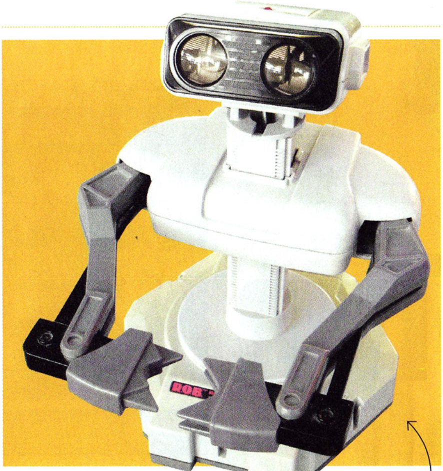

R.O.B.

WAS THE COOLEST NES GADGET

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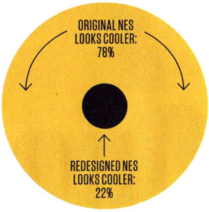
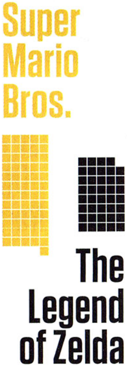
Power Pad 3% • NES Max 0% • NES Four Score/NES Satellite 0%

85 PERCENT

of you didn't play an NES until after it went off sale

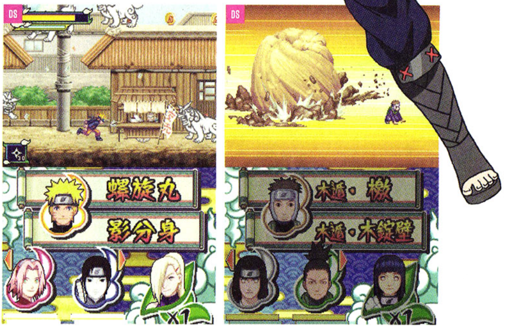


WHICH SERIES DEBUT HOLDS UP THE BEST?

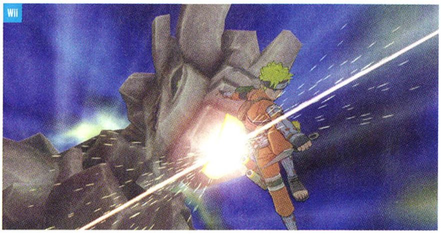


One-Two Punch

Fan-favorite publisher Atlus dishes out a double dose of **Naruto Shippuden** this November—**Dragon Blade Chronicles** for Wii and **Naruto vs. Sasuke** for DS.

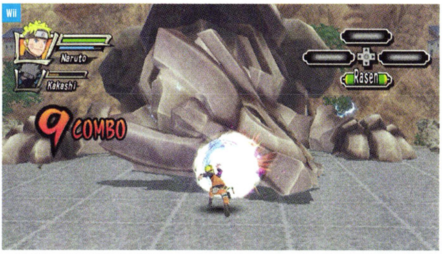


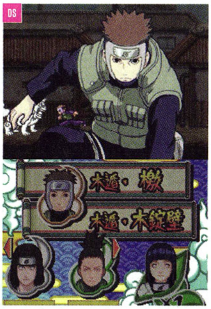
[Above] Plenty of fan-favorite Naruto characters can be seen in these screens from the Japanese version of the game.



ATLUS KNOWS how to please its fans—the publisher hands out plentiful soundtracks and art books with its titles. And the company's latest releases—Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles for the Wii console and Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke for the Nintendo DS handheld—are no exception. A GameStop preorder will net you a Naruto Shippuden baseball cap; there are also two Amazon-exclusive bundles (one for each version) that each come with a five-pack of Naruto figurines.

Of course, you probably want to know what sort of gameplay you're in for before you drop some of your hard-earned cash. Dragon Blade Chronicles is a cel-shaded action game in which five massive Genryu (Elemental Dragons) are wreaking havoc across the land. Only with the Dragon Blade can Naruto put a stop

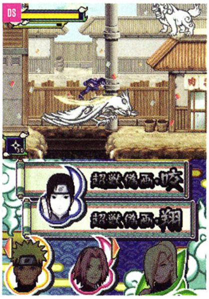

Wii
Naruto
Kakashi
Rasen
9 COMBO

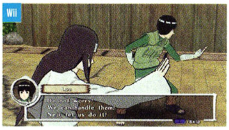


to these monsters. (He receives the legendary weapon from a strange girl named Akari, who reveals that her brother is the one who awakened the Genryu in order to take their powers and destroy the world.) Naruto is not alone on his quest; his rival Sasuke—the game's other playable character, who isn't exactly a good guy—has his own agenda regarding these creatures.

Naruto and Sasuke's rivalry is under the spotlight in Naruto vs. Sasuke, a 2D side-scrolling platformer wherein you, as Naruto, can find and recruit team members as you head to your confrontation against Sasuke. (This game is a retelling of events from the Naruto Shippuden story arc.) In addition to the single-player campaign, Naruto vs. Sasuke features a four-player Wireless Battle mode, as well as a cooperative Boss Rush mode.

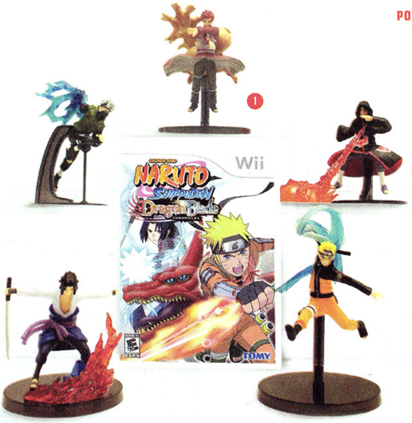
It remains to be seen if Atlus's first go at distributing Naruto titles will prove successful, but the various bonus goodies provide a solid incentive for fans to check the games out. **—JUSTIN C.**

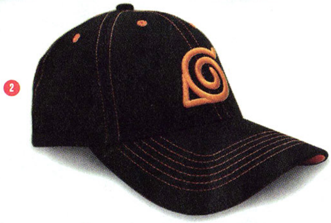


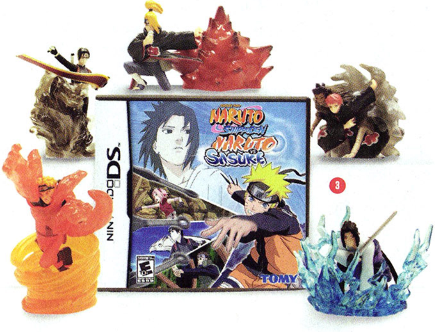


Lee

Do not worry!
We can handle them!
Neji, let us do it!


1
NARUTO SHIPPUDEN Dragon Blade CHRONICLES
Wii
TOMY



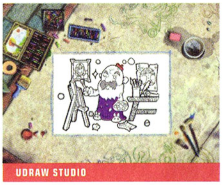

3
NARUTO SHIPPUDEN NARUTO VS SASUKE
NINTENDO DS
TOMY

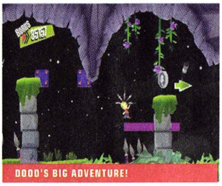
[1 and 3] For $30 more than the game itself, you can buy a game-and-figurine bundle at Amazon. [2] You'll have to preorder at GameStop if you want a cap.

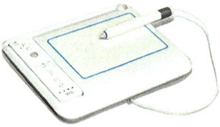
Wii
Naruto
Rasen

Back to the Drawing Board

THQ's **uDraw GameTablet** brings stylus gameplay to Wii.


UDRAW STUDIO

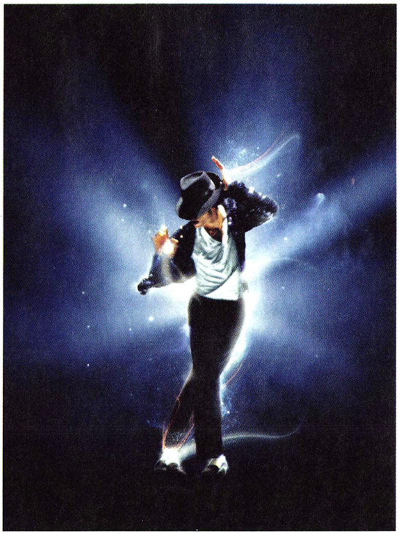

DOOD'S BIG ADVENTURE!



THQ WILL DEBUT a tablet peripheral for the Wii console this holiday season. Dubbed the uDraw GameTablet, the device is a 4" x 6" pen tablet with a dock for the Wii Remote controller that provides power as well as motion-control functions. The pressure-sensitive stylus, in addition to providing directional control, reproduces the functionality of the Nunchuk controller's C and Z Buttons.

uDraw Studio, a painting application, will be bundled with the device. THQ promises a robust platform for art creation, including nine adjustable implements (chalk, airbrush, stamp, etc.) and 11 canvas types. Mood-setting environments, replay functionality, and SD-card support (so artists can access their saved works for sharing or printing) round out the package. To keep things user-friendly to would-be Picassos, plenty of tutorials will be available to get the ball rolling.

Two games that take advantage of the uDraw GameTablet are also underway: Pictionary and Dood's Big Adventure! Details related to Pictionary are scarce (though anyone familiar with the game can likely fill in the blanks); Dood's Big Adventure! is a genre-busting platformer in which players use the stylus to customize not only Dood and his environs (in the name of creative puzzle-solving), but even the game's assembly of bad guys. **—PATRICK C.**



Don't Stop 'til You Get Enough

Michael Jackson: The Experience moonwalks to Wii.

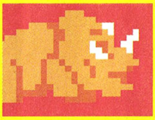
THE CREATORS of the Just Dance series wanna be startin' somethin' with the King of Pop's legacy; Michael Jackson: The Experience is headed to Wii this holiday season, courtesy of Ubisoft. If all goes as planned, the game will give MJ fans a chance to fill his gravity-defying loafers as they re-create his classic performances, singing his songs and performing his moves across locations inspired by his videos and stage performances.

Naturally, a set list jammed with Jackson's classic tracks is the draw. Although the game provides karaoke-style sing-along action (complete with onscreen lyrics), smooth-criminal crooning will be purely for unscored fun, as play focuses heavily on dance; players score points by mimicking the moves of an onscreen avatar as it performs authentic MJ steps. (If being scored on your ability to mimic Jackson's moves sounds preposterous to you, don't fret: Ubisoft promises accessibility here.)

Interestingly, The Experience will also feature School mode, in which budding princes and princesses of pop can watch training videos to learn genuine MJ choreography. After that, all that remains is public humiliation: competitive play for up to four players will burn this disco out. **—PATRICK C.**

A WINNER IS...

The ending to the latest Professor Layton game.



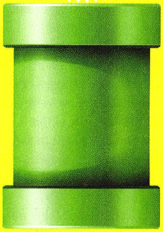
DODONGO DISLIKES...

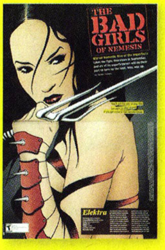
Having to hold Reset when turning off the NES.

WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO

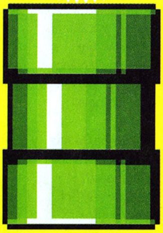



THE BAD GIRLS OF NEMESIS

Elektra

There were plenty of notable features in the November 2005 issue (including ones on Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness and Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow), but the strangest had to be a series of sultry pics of "The Bad Girls of Marvel Nemesis." Really? *Marvel Nemesis*? We promise not to do something like that again. In the countdown to NP's 200th issue, Final Fight for Super NES was named the 157th best game of all time, and Astro Boy: Omega Factor for the GBA was ranked the 128th.

10 YEARS AGO



EXCLUSIVE: INDY AND NABOO!

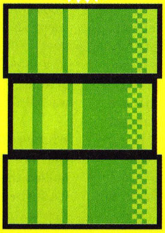
NINTENDO POWER

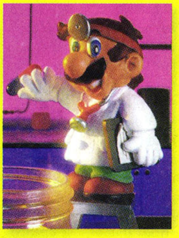
HEY YOU, Pikachu!

Talk to the Pokémon

Pokémon mania was running wild in November 2000. Hey You, Pikachu!—a Nintendo 64 title that came with a microphone that enabled players to talk to the popular yellow Pokémon in-game—was the issue's lead story, and Pokémon Gold Version and Pokémon Silver Version were also featured prominently. There was even a Pokémon comic! Other major titles included Star Wars Episode I: Battle for Naboo and Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine.

20 YEARS AGO





Everyone remembers that a sculpture of Mario adorned the very first issue of Nintendo Power; it's not as well known that a clay Mario also appeared on the cover of Vol. 18 to commemorate the release of Dr. Mario for the NES. The big feature in the issue, though, spotlighted Konami's monstrous Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse. The NP crew mapped the entire game over 21 pages plus the back of a poster. On the front of the poster? Mega Man 3.

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202 Solitaire
303 Tangram
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Mission Debriefing

Producer Yoshio Sakamoto gives the final word on Metroid: Other M.

The danger has been averted, the galaxy is at peace, and Metroid: Other M is finally in the hands of eager gamers around the world. Now that the project—a collaboration between Nintendo and Tecmo's Team Ninja—is complete, we've had the chance to speak to longtime Metroid producer Yoshio Sakamoto to get his take on how it all turned out, as well as learn more about what went into making the latest installment of the beloved Metroid franchise.

NINTENDO POWER You've commented that you wanted Metroid: Other M to be the ultimate Metroid game. Do you think you've accomplished this?

YOSHIO SAKAMOTO I do believe that we've accomplished this. From the very start of the project, we had decided on all of the new ideas that would be necessary to create "the ultimate Metroid," as well as the mechanics we would need to link them together. And in bringing Other M to fruition, we were able to incorporate even more great ideas on top of that, making for a highly polished final design. So Other M ended up transcending even my original vision for the project.

Were there any elements of the old Metroid games that you especially thought had to be removed or updated for Other M?

Our primary concept for making "the ultimate Metroid" was to bring all of the series's core mechanics to the forefront, but in an even more refined form. So we incorporated just about all of them. However, we didn't continue the tradition of having defeated enemies drop recovery items like energy pellets and missiles. In order to challenge new styles of game design, it was extremely important not to bring over this particular element that players have come to take for granted.

The combat in Other M feels a lot different than it did in past Metroid games. Was this something you actively were trying to accomplish? And if so, what are the reasons behind the change?

We had two major goals for the combat system of Other M. One was using aspects like auto-aim and Sensemove to allow players to guide Samus through 3D environments with 2D-esque controls, while being able to intelligently target foes and intuitively dodge enemy attacks. Now, I can assure you that this doesn't make Other M a simplistic or easy game. I think anyone who plays Other M will immediately realize why we did it.

Our other goal was to add powerful close-range attacks like the Overblast and Lethal Strike moves. Needless to say, this is an area in which Team Ninja, our partner in creating Other M, has a great deal of expertise. It was due to them suggesting this idea, and then implementing it so successfully, that Other M has such an exciting and satisfying combat system. We pursued these goals in order to make a game that could offer exhilarating combat through a simple control scheme.

Metroid: Other M also feels a lot more suspenseful than the classic Metroid games—like something could jump out at any time.

This isn't the first Metroid game to have a tense and thrilling atmosphere. But if you're experiencing those sensations anew with Other M, it's probably due to how much the camera angles and sound effects heighten the level of tension during both gameplay and event scenes. The game system in Other M has allowed us to do all of the things that we were never able to achieve with a conventional 2D presentation. A mood dripping with thrills and suspense has always been an important factor in the Metroid series, but since this Metroid also has elements of suspense within its story, we wanted to play that up this time.

What was the reason for including the third-person-perspective behind-the-back segments?

We used it to heighten the sense of free movement during particularly tense scenes, or to act as a more natural bridge to a movie sequence, or whenever it felt appropriate, on a case-by-case basis. To put it simply, sometimes we just needed to have Samus walk around.

What made you decide to be able to regenerate health and missiles instead of collecting refills from enemies?

We needed to challenge the established way that characters regain health in Metroid-type action games. It's hard to come up with new incentives and mechanics when you're wedded to an established convention, and this was making the 2D Metroid series feel stale to a certain extent. This is a very deep problem, and it had been difficult to solve within the structure of previous games. But since we created a new structure with Other M, we were finally able to break free of this convention. This allowed us to add new mechanics, such as players having to look for opportunities to use Samus's concentration mode during combat, so I think we

succeeded at that challenge. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that Other M's system will become the new convention for the Metroid series. But it is significant that we were able to make a Metroid in which enemies don't drop recovery items. Also, this time the post-ending unlockable content changes based only on your item-collection rate. So the game doesn't consider factors like completion time.

What would you say are the three most memorable parts of Metroid: Other M?
I could only speculate about what players will find unforgettable about Other M, but it would make me very happy if it included the following things: The way Other M's game mechanics were so fresh and easy to pick up and play; how charming and attractive Samus was; the spectacular work done by everyone on the "Project M" team.

Samus seems a lot more vulnerable in this game than in other games. Why do you think it's important that she has a vulnerable side?
I think we're drawn to characters with hearts of steel. Samus is certainly a strong woman, always eager to face challenges and overcome them. However, she isn't perfect, and she bears a certain amount of vulnerability as well. She is a human being, not a machine. Her heart is pure and unburdened by doubt, and that's what allows her to grow as a person. She has the sort of flexible strength that allows one to learn from their failings. This is the true nature of Samus as I see her, and what I wanted to show with this game is that she is so much more than the sum of her vulnerabilities.

Why does Samus decide to impose limits on what equipment she can use?
One of the fundamental conventions of the Metroid series is acquiring abilities (which at one point you already had) that allow you to reach new areas. So rather than just using the excuse that, "hey, it's a video game," we're always trying to find natural and believable reasons for why Samus would lose her abilities at the beginning of her mission, and then find them again in various locations. In addition to serving as a plausible explanation, the idea of having her abilities restricted by Adam also has an important meaning within the game's story.

Since you're a big movie fan, are there any movies that especially inspired any aspect of Other M?
I do enjoy movies, but I don't know if I would call myself a big movie fan. But in response to your question, Other M wasn't directly inspired by any particular film. The inspiration I receive from movies is indeed a major influence on any game I work on; not just the Metroid series. But rather than direct inspiration, it's more like I collect a bunch of fragmentary images, inspired by all sorts of different works, and try to form something meaningful out of that. The inspiration I've taken from the film *Deep Red*, which I discussed in my GDC talk, is a special exception.

Where was Kraid?
Kraid probably fled somewhere out of fear of Samus. But I wouldn't be surprised to see him reappear one day, on a quest for revenge.

What are some things in the game that longtime Metroid fans should be on the lookout for but that new players might not notice?
Since we were setting out to create a new type of Metroid this time, we didn't pay much attention to that sort of thing. We tried to avoid having a lot of callbacks to past games that would leave newcomers to the series feeling left out. But I do think the entire game is studded with very traditional Metroid elements of style and atmosphere, and the bigger a fan of the series you are, the more strongly those elements will resonate with you.

Do you have any additional thoughts on the project now that it's done?
One of the great frustrations of game development is coming up with a good idea at a point at which it is no longer possible to implement it, and this happens to some extent with every game. But with Other M, I don't feel there were any good ideas that ended up being left on the table. We stuck with it until the last possible minute, and pretty much every good idea we had made it into the game.

Classic Confrontations

Sakamoto isn't just the producer on Metroid: Other M; he's actually been with the series since the beginning. To coincide with our NES anniversary celebration, we asked Sakamoto a few questions about the Metroid games of the 8-bit era.

Can you describe what it was like working on the original Metroid?
Back then, at the dawn of the video game industry, we had almost no experience with game development, and simply making a Metroid-type game was itself an incredible challenge. Samus Aran, the hotshot female bounty hunter and aviator, the Space Pirates ruled by the artificial life-form Mother Brain, Kraid, Ridley, and the Metroids.... Everything about them and their world was born as a result of us overcoming one game-development challenge after another. When we started the development phase of the project, we didn't have anything prepared at all! Just as life is born out of a process of gradual evolution and sudden mutation, the Metroid franchise was created in a similar fashion by a group of amateurs recklessly facing a challenge that was beyond their expertise.

When you spoke at GDC a few months ago, you said that the original Metroid was designed through trial and error. How so?
As I said, at the time we had very little experience with game development. We didn't have any blueprint for what we wanted to do, so every day was a series of trial-and-error challenges. Since we weren't proceeding under any sort of predetermined plan, we were always under intense deadline pressure. Nothing came easy to us, so in a concerted effort to expand our knowledge of game development, we were always trying new techniques and experimenting with new ways to put our tools to use. In terms of organization and planning, I can't say we did a very good job, but the techniques and know-how I cultivated in those days are now extremely precious to me.

Why did the Metroid development team decide to make Samus a woman? At what point in the development process was that decision made?
As the grueling development phase started winding down, and we had a little energy to spare, someone casually said, "I think it would be interesting if the hero turned out to be a woman at the end." In order to reveal this magnificent truth about Samus, we immediately set to work implementing the multiending structure.

Why weren't you involved with Metroid II: Return of Samus?
At that point, I was working on two Game Boy games outside of the Metroid series. Unfortunately, neither game was released outside of Japan, so I'll take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about them. One was a 3D sci-fi shooting-game that used wireframe graphics, titled X. The game was just recently revived as a DSiWare title. (In North America, the game was released on DSiWare under the title X-Scape on 5/31/2010.) The other game was an action-RPG (I guess?) with a quirky main character that was titled The Bell Tolls for the Frog. It was an eccentric game that poked fun at the fantasy worlds that were cool at the time.

STAR POWER

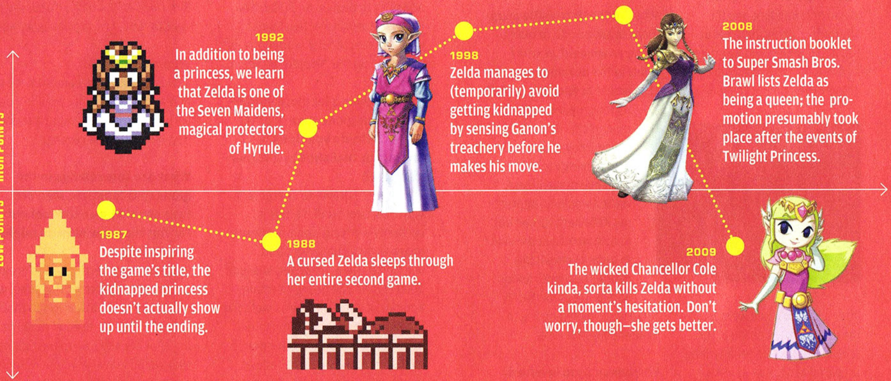
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
NES, 1987

Princess Zelda

She may suffer from Frequent Kidnapping Syndrome, but this princess is always ready to step up and defend Hyrule.

CAREER GRAPH



1987
Despite inspiring the game's title, the kidnapped princess doesn't actually show up until the ending.

1988
A cursed Zelda sleeps through her entire second game.

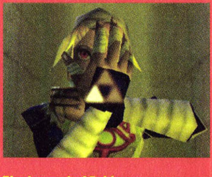
1992
In addition to being a princess, we learn that Zelda is one of the Seven Maidens, magical protectors of Hyrule.

1998
Zelda manages to (temporarily) avoid getting kidnapped by sensing Ganon's treachery before he makes his move.

2008
The instruction booklet to Super Smash Bros. Brawl lists Zelda as being a queen; the promotion presumably took place after the events of Twilight Princess.

2009
The wicked Chancellor Cole kinda, sorta kills Zelda without a moment's hesitation. Don't worry, though—she gets better.

OUR FAVORITE PRINCESS ZELDA GAMES



The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

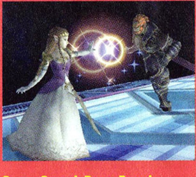
NINTENDO 64, 1998

This is the first game in which Zelda comes into her own as a character. No longer a helpless damsel in distress, Zelda—under the guise of Sheik—trains as a fighter and helps Link.

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

GAMECUBE, 2003

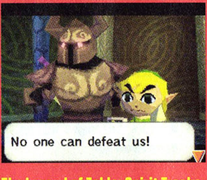
At the beginning of The Wind Waker, the sassy pirate girl, Tetra, isn't aware of her true identity: Princess Zelda. Even after she learns the truth, she battles alongside Link as the pair takes on Ganon.



Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Wii, 2008

Fans could actually control Zelda and her alter ego, Sheik, in Brawl (as they could in its predecessor, Super Smash Bros. Melee), allowing the princess to finally give Ganon that kick in the face that he deserves.

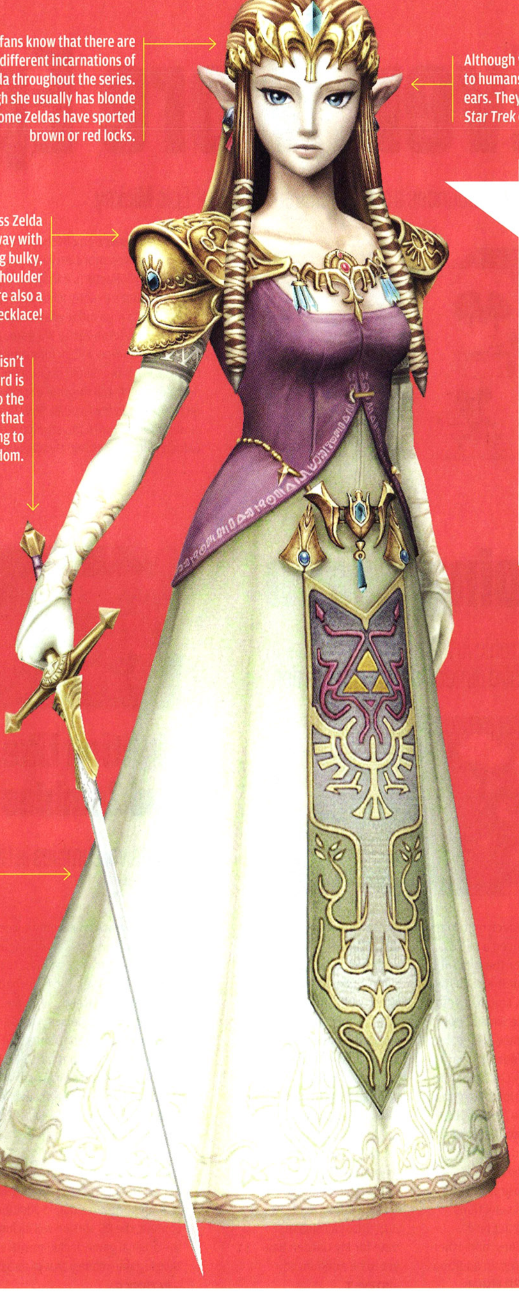


No one can defeat us!

The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks

NINTENDO DS, 2009

With her spirit separated from her body, Zelda is trapped within a hulking suit of armor for this adventure. She uses her newfound powers to help Link stop the Demon King Malladus.



Most fans know that there are many different incarnations of Zelda throughout the series. Although she usually has blonde hair, some Zeldas have sported brown or red locks.

Although very similar in appearance to humans, Hylians possess pointed ears. They help Zelda blend in at any *Star Trek* convention.

Only Princess Zelda can get away with wearing bulky, armored shoulder pads that are also a beautiful necklace!

Zelda normally isn't armed, but this sword is a good reminder to the enemies of Hyrule that this princess is willing to fight for her kingdom.

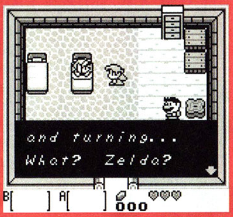
The royal gown displays the mark of the Triforce, the sacred symbol of Hyrule's three goddesses. The three triangles that form the Triforce represent courage, wisdom, and power; Zelda herself is the bearer of the Triforce of Wisdom.

> "I will wait for you here. That's what princesses have always done. From what I understand, it's kind of a family tradition."

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS, NINTENDO DS, 2009

MISSING PRINCESS

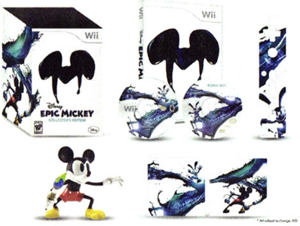
Zelda, not surprisingly, is a very important character in the Legend of Zelda universe. After all, her name is in every title. Even so, she doesn't appear in every game. In The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening for Game Boy, the princess is mentioned only at the beginning of the adventure. Likewise, in Majora's Mask she is seen only in a flashback. And in order to see Zelda in Oracle of Ages and Oracle of Seasons for Game Boy Color, you must play through both of those titles and link them together via a password.



and turning...
What? Zelda?

Even More Epic

Disney announces a special limited edition of **Epic Mickey.**



* Art subject to change. ©D

HOW DO YOU MAKE one of the most anticipated games of the year even more exciting? By announcing a limited-run collector's edition of the game—that's how. And that's exactly what Disney Interactive has done with its innovative platforming adventure Epic Mickey. In addition to the Wii game disc, Epic Mickey Collector's Edition will include a behind-the-scenes bonus DVD, Wii-console skins, a Wii Remote faceplate, and a five-inch-tall figurine of Mickey himself. The collector's edition is priced at $69.99 and will be released simultaneously with the standard edition of the game (which will cost $49.99) this holiday season. **—CHRIS H.**

POWER QUIZ

EASY

In Star Fox 64, who encourages you to "do a barrel roll?"

STARFOX 64
NINTENDO 64
INCLUDES RUMBLE PAK CONTROLLER ACCESSORY

AVERAGE

Who was on the original Star Fox team?

HARDCORE

What is the name of Wolf O'Donnell's starfighter?

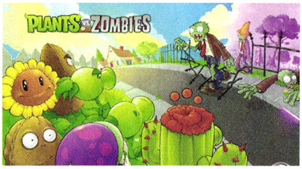
ANSWERS

EASY: Peppy Hare; AVERAGE: James McCloud, Peppy Hare, and Pigma Dengar; HARDCORE: Red Fang

Going Green

Electronic Arts brings horticulture to the third dimension with **My Garden.**

AT E3, Electronic Arts announced a trio of titles for the Nintendo 3DS handheld: FIFA Soccer, Madden NFL, and The Sims 3. Now an all-new project has been added to that list—My Garden. More simulation than game, the title lets players cultivate their own 3D garden. It offers hundreds of flowers to choose from, and certain selections will attract birds, butterflies, and other creatures. In addition to the 3D visuals, My Garden takes advantage of the new system's myriad features by having players whistle bird calls into the microphone, shake the handheld to scare away unwanted visitors, and take photographs to earn new items. A Tanuki guide lends a magical touch to the garden with more than 20 unlockable abilities. As with all Nintendo 3DS titles, a release date for My Garden has yet to be announced. **—STEVE T.**



Fighting Like...Plants and Zombies?

Plants vs. Zombies is (finally) headed our way.

POPCAP GAMES, THE wildly successful studio behind Bejeweled and Peggle, is bringing its biggest juggernaut, Plants vs. Zombies, to the DS in January. Though the DS version is perhaps late to the party (the game has already shambled its way through PC, Mac, iOS, and Xbox Live Arcade versions), PopCap will appease Nintendo's faithful by including new, exclusive content in the DS version.

Plants vs. Zombies has risen to fame by combining the two things no game should be without: tower defense and zombies. Players erect various plant-based defenses to protect their suburban abode from a horde of rampaging undead. Cartoonish graphics invite casual-gamer interest while strategic depth delivers good times to hardcore tower-defenders.

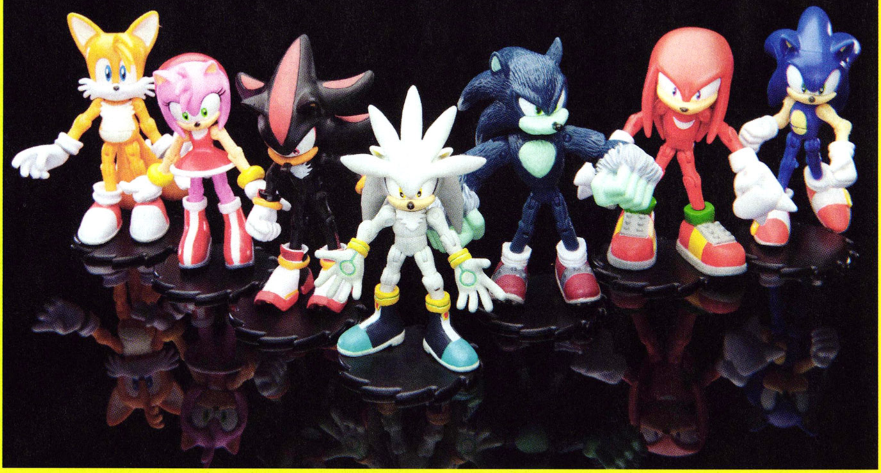
PopCap assures that in addition to its exclusive content, the DS version will include everything from the original game, including Adventure, Survival, and Puzzle game modes, as well as assorted minigames. **—PATRICK C.**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

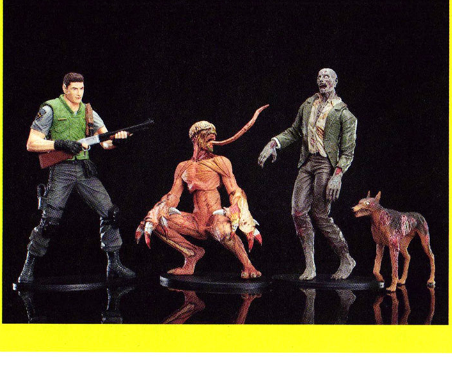
Whole 'Hog

Available individually from Jazwares, this cool collection of Sonic the Hedgehog three-inch character figures includes (from left to right) Miles "Tails" Prower, Amy Rose, Shadow, Silver, Sonic's Werehog transformation from Sonic Unleashed, Knuckles, and the ol' Blue Blur himself.



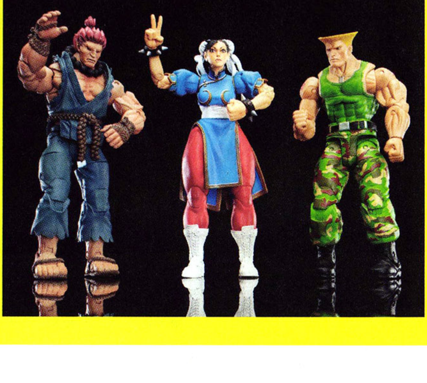
The S.T.A.R.S. Are Out

Series one of this hyper-detailed set of Resident Evil toys includes supercop Chris Redfield, a Licker, some random joe that got zombified, and an equally unlucky dog.



Round Two—Fight!

The second series of the supercool Super Street Fighter IV figures includes fan-favorite fighters Akuma, Chun Li, and Guile.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Kirby's Epic Yarn
3. Donkey Kong Country Returns
4. Epic Mickey
5. Sonic Colors

NINTENDO DS

1. Pokémon Black Version/ Pokémon White Version
2. Super Scribblenauts
3. Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!
4. Professor Layton and the Unwound Future
5. Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario*
2. Mario Kart*
3. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
4. Kid Icarus: Uprising
5. Star Fox 64 3D

Wii

AAA Lucha Libre Heroes of the Ring	Konami	10/10
Active Life Explorer	Namco Bandai	10/10
Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader? Back to School	THQ	11/10
Babysitting Mama	Majesco	11/10
Bakugan: Defenders of the Core	Activision	11/10
Battle of Giants: Dinosaur Strike	Ubisoft	11/10
Battle vs. Chess	SouthPeak	10/10
Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Ben 10 Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction	D3Publisher	10/10
Beyblade: Metal Fusion—Battle Fortress	Hudson	11/10
The Biggest Loser Challenge	THQ	11/10
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011	Activision	10/10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Camaro: Wild Ride	Storm City	11/10
Conduit 2	Sega	Q1 11
Create	Electronic Arts	11/10
DanceDanceRevolution	Konami	10/10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Deadliest Catch: Sea of Chaos	Crave	11/10
Deca Sports 3	Hudson	10/10
Def Jam Rapstar	Konami	10/10
Disney Channel All Star Party	Disney	10/10
DJ Hero 2	Activision	10/10
Donkey Kong Country Returns	Nintendo	11/10
Dood's Big Adventure	THQ	HOL 10
Dragon's Lair Trilogy	Destineer	FALL 10
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	Q4 10
EA Sports Active 2	EA Sports	11/10
EA Sports Active NFL Training Camp	EA Sports	11/10
Enclave: Shadows of Twilight	TopWare	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	11/10
Family Feud Decades	Ubisoft	11/10
FlingSmash	Nintendo	11/10
GoldenEye 007	Activision	11/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	11/10
Hasbro Family Game Night 3	Electronic Arts	10/10
Heathcliff: The Fast and the Furriest	Storm City	11/10
Hollywood Squares	Ubisoft	10/10
Honda Fever	Storm City	10/10
Jeopardy!	THQ	11/10
Jewel Quest Trilogy	GameMill	10/10
Jillian Michaels Fitness Ultimatum 2011	D3Publisher	11/10
Just Dance 2	Ubisoft	10/10
Just Dance Kids	Ubisoft	11/10
Karaoke Revolution Glee	Konami	11/10
Kirby's Epic Yarn	Nintendo	10/10
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	2011
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	2/11
Littlest Pet Shop 3 Biggest Stars	Electronic Arts	10/10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	1/11
Man vs. Wild	Crave	11/10
Mario Sports Mix	Nintendo	2011
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	11/10
Megamind: Mega Team Unite	THQ	11/10
Michael Jackson: The Experience	Ubisoft	11/10
Monopoly Streets	Electronic Arts	10/10
Monster Jam 2011	Activision	11/10
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	Atlus	11/10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Nerf 2: N-Strike Elite	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
Nickelodeon Fit	2K Play	11/10
Oops! Prank Party	Hudson	10/10
Pac-Man Party	Namco Bandai	11/10
Pheasants Forever: Wingshooter	GameMill	10/10
Pictionary	THQ	HOL 10
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	Nintendo	11/10
Pro Evolution Soccer 2011	Konami	11/10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Raving Rabbids Travel in Time	Ubisoft	11/10
Rock Band 3	MTV Games	10/10
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	TBA
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	Capcom	10/10
Sesame Street: Cookie's Counting Carnival	Warner Bros.	10/10
Sesame Street: Elmo's A-to-Zoo Adventure	Warner Bros.	10/10
Shaun White Skateboarding	Ubisoft	10/10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	10/10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Sonic Colors	Sega	11/10
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	LucasArts	10/10
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	11/10
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	Ubisoft	11/10
Tony Hawk Shred	Activision	10/10
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	Disney	12/10
uDraw Studio	THQ	HOL 10
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	11/10
Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?	Ubisoft	10/10
WWE All Stars	THQ	2011
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	THQ	10/10
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/10
Zhu Zhu Pets: Wild Bunch	Activision	10/10
Zumba Fitness	Majesco	10/10

NINTENDO DS

Alpha & Omega	Storm City	10/10
Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	THQ	11/10
Art Academy	Nintendo	10/10
Atari's Greatest Hits: Volume 1	Atari	11/10
Bakugan: Defenders of the Core	Activision	11/10
Battle vs. Chess	SouthPeak	10/10
Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Ben 10 Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction	D3Publisher	10/10
Beyblade: Metal Fusion	Hudson	11/10
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011	Activision	10/10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Camaro Wild Ride	Storm City	11/10
Crafting Mama	Majesco	10/10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dora the Explorer: Dora's Cooking Club	2K Play	11/10
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Frantic Foto: Heathcliff Comic Edition	Storm City	10/10
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove	Natsume	Q4 10
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	Capcom	2011
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Go Diego Go Mega Bloks Build and Rescue	2K Play	11/10
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	Nintendo	11/10
GoldenEye 007	Activision	11/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	11/10
Honda Fever	Storm City	10/10
House, M.D.	Legacy	TBA
Imagine Fashion Stylist	Ubisoft	11/10
Imagine Resort Owner	Ubisoft	10/10
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	Activision	11/10
Jeopardy!	THQ	11/10
Jewel Master: Cradle of Athena	Storm City	10/10
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	Square Enix	TBA
Kung Zhu	Activision	10/10
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	2/11
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Blue Team	Electronic Arts	10/10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Pink Team	Electronic Arts	10/10

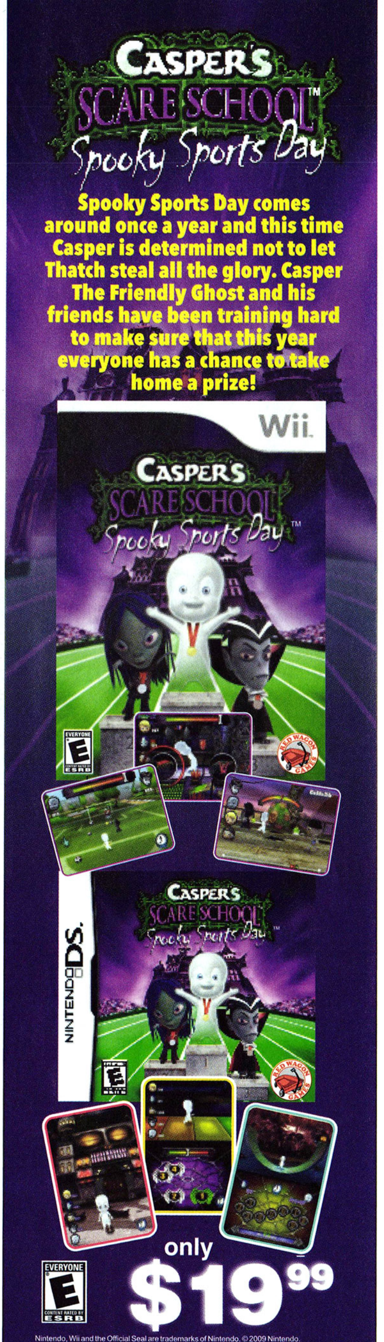
RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Purple Team	Electronic Arts	10/10
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	Nintendo	11/10

Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	11/10
Megamind: The Blue Defender	THQ	11/10
Michael Jackson: The Experience	Ubisoft	11/10
Monopoly Streets	Electronic Arts	10/10
Monster Jam 2011	Activision	11/10
Monster Tale	Majesco	12/10
My Baby 3	Majesco	10/10
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	Atlus	11/10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	Aksys	11/10
Okamiden	Capcom	3/11
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	11/10
Petz Fantasy: Moonlight Magic	Ubisoft	10/10
Petz Fantasy: Sunshine Magic	Ubisoft	10/10
Petz Nursery 2	Ubisoft	11/10
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Plants vs. Zombies	PopCap	1/11
Pokémon Black Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Pokémon White Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Rock Band 3	MTV	10/10
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	Natsume	FALL 10
Sesame Street: Cookie's Counting Carnival	Warner Bros.	10/10
Sesame Street: Elmo's A-to-Zoo Adventure	Warner Bros.	10/10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	10/10
Sonic Colors	Sega	11/10
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	LucasArts	10/10
Style Lab Fashion Design	Ubisoft	10/10
Super Scribblenauts	Warner Bros.	10/10
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
TRON: Evolution	Disney	12/11
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	11/10
Who Wants to Be a Millionaire	Ubisoft	10/10
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/10
Zhu Zhu Pets: Wild Bunch	Activision	10/10

NINTENDO 3DS

Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Asphalt GT	Gameloft	TBA
Assassin's Creed Lost Legacy	Ubisoft	TBA
Baseball*	Konami	TBA
Batman*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Battle of Giants: Dinosaur Strike	Ubisoft	TBA
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Bokujyoumonogatari 3D*	Marvelous	TBA
Bomberman*	Hudson	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
cubic ninja	AQ	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dead or Alive 3D*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	TBA
DJ Hero 3D	Activision	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Driver Renegade	Ubisoft	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Face Racers: Photo Finish	Majesco	TBA
FIFA Soccer*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Frogger*	Konami	TBA
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Hollywood '61*	Ubisoft	TBA
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	TBA
Kingdom Hearts 3DS*	Square Enix	TBA
Kororinpa*	Hudson	TBA
Kung Fu Panda Kaboom of Doom	THQ	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Madden NFL*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Mario Kart*	Nintendo	TBA
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	TBA
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	Konami	TBA
My Garden	Electronic Arts	TBA
Naruto Shippuden Action	Tomy	TBA
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Nintendogs + Cats	Nintendo	TBA
Pac-Man & Galaga*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	TBA
PilotWings Resort	Nintendo	TBA
Pro Evolution Soccer*	Konami	TBA
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puss N Boots	THQ	TBA
Resident Evil Revelations	Capcom	TBA
Ridge Racer*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Saints Row: Drive-By	THQ	TBA
Samurai Warriors 3D*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	TBA
Sonic*	Sega	TBA
Star Fox 64 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Steel Diver	Nintendo	TBA
Super Monkey Ball*	Sega	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition*	Capcom	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	TBA
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	TBA
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA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Spooky Sports Day comes around once a year and this time Casper is determined not to let Thatch steal all the glory. Casper The Friendly Ghost and his friends have been training hard to make sure that this year everyone has a chance to take home a prize!

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Jelly Kingdoms

DSiWARE PREVIEW
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HINTS HUNTER
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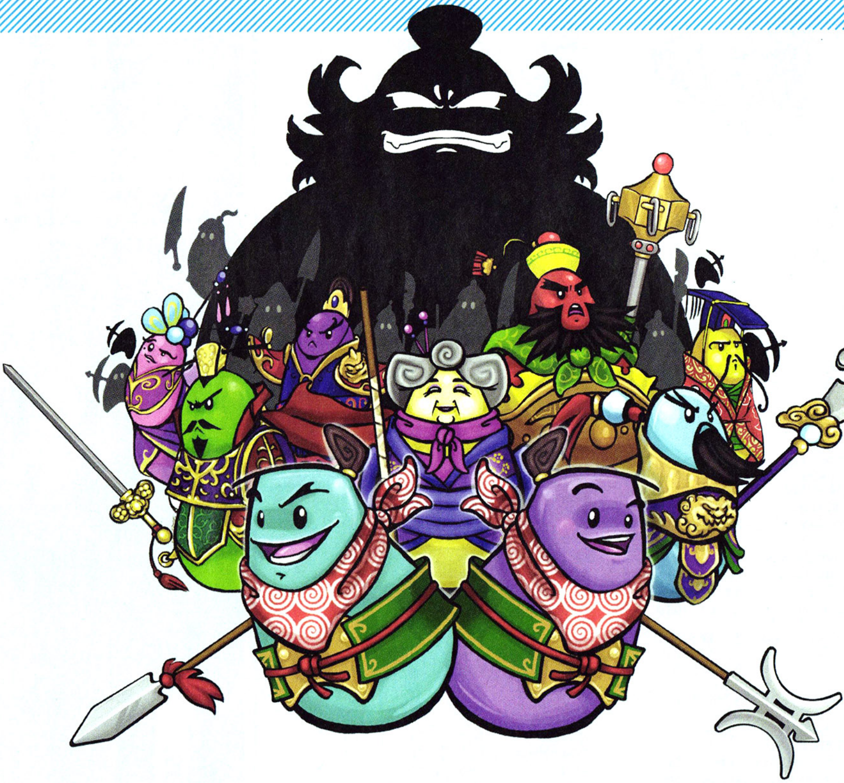
MATCH UP!
MY FARM
PETZ DOGZ FAMILY
TURN: THE LOST ARTIFACT



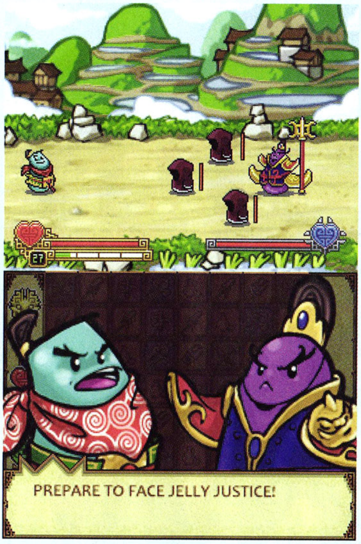
By the Power of Jelly!

Puzzle meets adventure meets ancient Chinese history in Jelly Kingdoms for DSiWare.

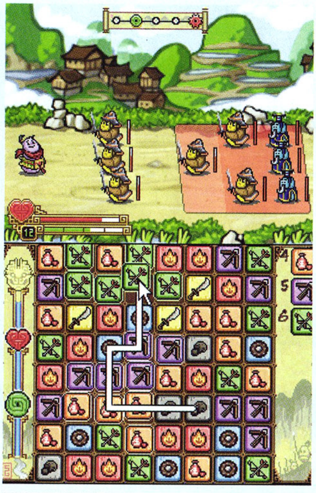
WHAT'S CUTE, SQUISHY, and ready to lay waste to an enemy army? You are! Or, at least, you will be when you play Jelly Kingdoms, an upcoming DSiWare title from Schell Games. Loosely based on the Chinese historical saga *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the game puts you in the role of a young citizen of the Jelly Kingdoms (you get to choose the name and gender) who gets kicked out of the village and winds up in a world of lighthearted adventure and whimsical combat.

"We've always loved the idea of pairing up unlikely concepts, and a world of epic battles staged by these kind of cute jelly creatures seemed hilarious to us," comments design director Bryan Cash. "There's just something delightful about seeing some grim warrior challenging you to a fight, and then bouncing his way across the field of battle."

But the scenario isn't the only aspect of Jelly Kingdoms that merges disparate elements; the gameplay combines a



PREPARE TO FACE JELLY JUSTICE!



[Above] This tile grid is at the heart of Jelly Kingdoms. By matching tiles, you'll perform various actions.

brain-teasing puzzle with adventure aspects. You interact with the game via the Nintendo DSi system's touch screen, where you slide tiles around an eight-by-eight grid. As you drag a tile through the rest of the group it will swap positions with other tiles; your goal is to form clusters of four or more like tiles, which will cause your hero to perform actions on the top screen. Weapon tiles (swords, crossbows, and halberds, for example) will cause your character to attack enemies at varying ranges; health-potion tiles will restore some of your life energy; and shield tiles will allow you to block enemy attacks. You can also create clusters of elemental magic tiles that don't do anything on their own, but can augment attacks with powers such as fire (for damage over time) or thunder (to paralyze foes).

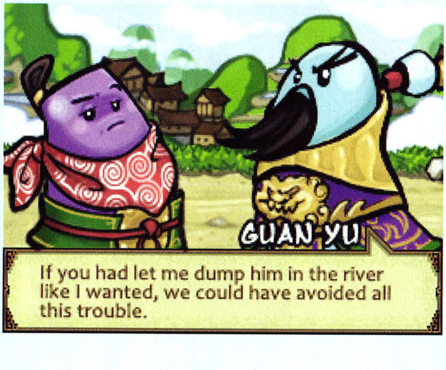
Several waves of turn-based battles stand between you and the end of each stage, and as you progress through the levels, you'll encounter trickier enemy types and powerful bosses, some of which will require new strategies. "It won't always be the a case of just trying to toss out as much damage as possible," Cash explains, "but rather figuring out which weapons and combos work best on which enemies, and determining the best and most opportune place to hit."

In addition to normal offensive and defensive skills, you have a Chi meter that rises when you create tile clusters. You can use its power to turn tough battles in your favor by shuffling the puzzle board, healing yourself, or unleashing the fury of the heavens on your enemies.

But there's more to Jelly Kingdoms than just tiles and combat; it's also an opportunity to meet up with colorful heroes and villains. Historical characters from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, such as Guan Yu and Liu Bei, act as guides on your quest, and they'll help you face off against threats such as corrupt court officials, the mystical and rebellious Zhang brothers, and a dastardly warlord.

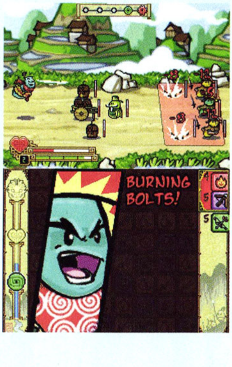
"We wanted to find a world with unique and heroic characters and lots of opportunities for epic battles," Cash remarks. "*Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is chock-full of those and has plenty of room for humor based on just how ridiculously grandiose the story is. Rather than a straight retelling of the story, we're picking the most interesting and exciting parts for the player to experience, while poking a bit of fun at it. Fans of *R3K* will get to see some of the events and heroes they've grown to love (albeit with a jelly twist), and those unfamiliar with the story will get to experience an epic adventure of battles and betrayal, honor and humor."

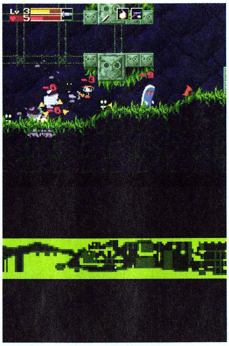
With its quirky mix of elements, Jelly Kingdoms is shaping up as one of the most unusual games in the DSiWare lineup. As Cash puts it, "The puzzle game is completely unique—a totally new mechanic that we've all fallen in love with. We're combining that with battle strategy, an exciting adventure in ancient China, plus a sense of humor. I think it is safe to say this game will be different from anything you've seen on DSiWare!" We'll get to find out for sure when the game is released early next year. —**CHRIS H.**

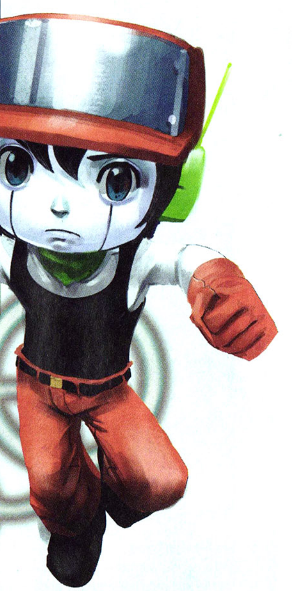


GUAN YU

If you had let me dump him in the river like I wanted, we could have avoided all this trouble.







Have Cave, Will Travel

Outstanding action-adventure game Cave Story rockets to DSiWare.

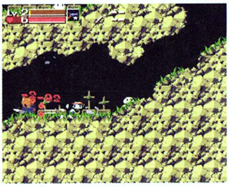
WHEN CAVE STORY was released for WiiWare earlier this year, it proved itself to be one of the best games available for the service thanks to its combination of challenging action, intriguing story, and old-school game design. Soon you'll be able to experience it all in portable form when publisher Nicalis brings the title to DSiWare.

Like the WiiWare and PC versions of Cave Story, the DSiWare game puts you in the role of Quote, a hat-wearing lad who wakes to find himself inexplicably deep underground. He doesn't know how he got there or even who he is, and all he can do at the beginning of the game is jump. It isn't long, however, before you acquire your first weapon and make your way to a village populated by sentient rabbitlike creatures called Mimigas. The village is in a bit of an uproar thanks to the appearance of a newcomer named Sue and the threat of an evil doctor who's been kidnapping villagers, and you quickly get caught up in the chaos.

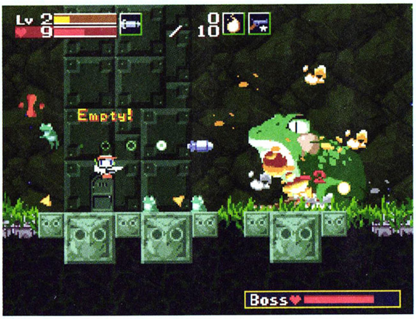
From there, the adventure takes you to a variety of environments, from the Egg Corridor (where giant dragon eggs wait to hatch) to the grassy Bushlands to the trap-filled Labyrinth. Along the way, you'll acquire and power up a variety of weapons—including missiles, a machine gun, a sword, and fireballs—as you battle enemy creatures and the doctor's henchmen: the witch Misery and the suitcase-shaped Balrog. There are numerous items to collect (including life capsules to extend your health, an air tank for breathing underwater, a jet pack, and a mask to disguise yourself as a Mimiga), and the levels are built for exploration; the world isn't as open-ended and interconnected as the one in, say, Metroid, but the stages are far from linear and there are tons of secrets to discover. The game even has multiple endings.

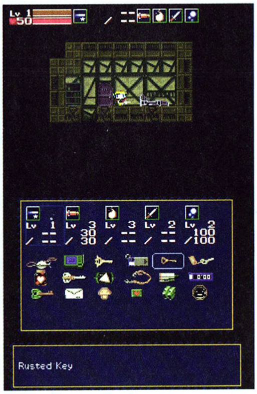
Though the DSiWare version of the game doesn't have all the features of its WiiWare counterpart, it does include three difficulty options, a Time Attack mode for the insanely tough Sanctuary stage, and a new music player that lets you listen to any tunes you've heard in the game. Judging by what we've played so far, Cave Story appears to have made the transition to DSiWare flawlessly.

—CHRIS H.



[Below] If you aren't careful when fighting Balfrog, you just might croak. (Groan.)





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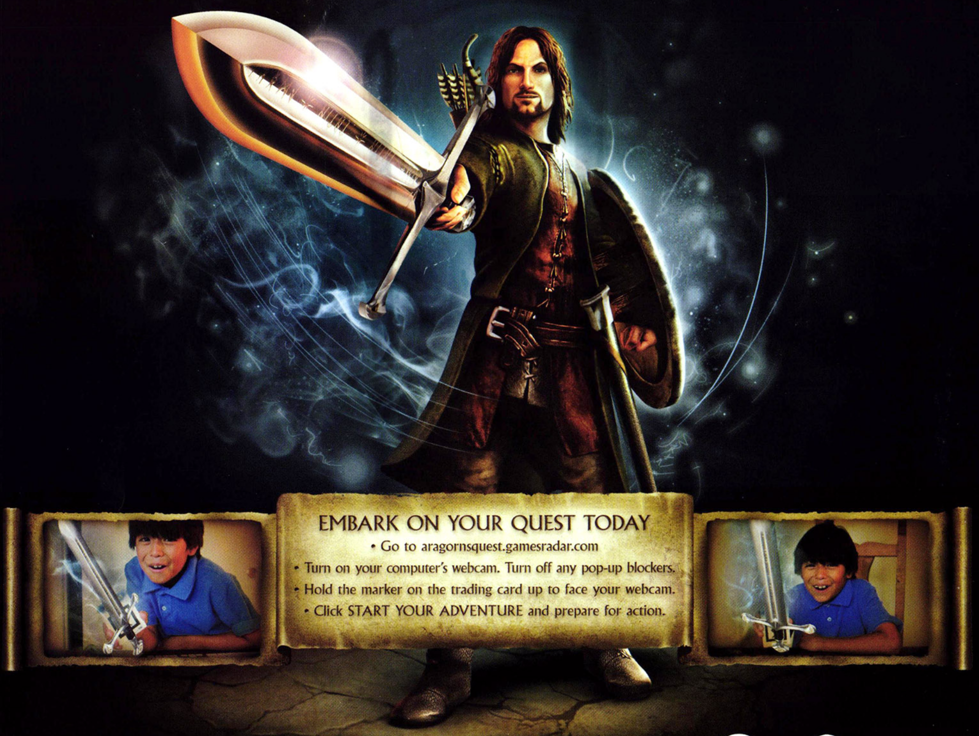

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E-T Fantasy Violence

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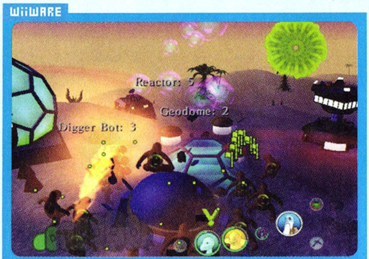
EVERYONE 10+ ™
Suggestive Themes
Alcohol and Tobacco Reference
Mild Suggestive Themes
Violent References
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
DSiWARE

WiiWARE



A MONSTECA CORRAL: ALIENS VS. MONSTERS

PUBLISHER: **ONTECA** GENRE: **STRATEGY** Wii POINTS: **500**

In gamer shorthand, this is Pikmin lite. Fortunately, there's sufficient weirdness here to justify Onteca's venture. Each level requires players to gather a herd of Stompies (homogenous, claylike humanoids), collect scattered gas bubbles, feed said bubbles to the resident astromaggot (yep!), then ride the glutted larva to parts unknown (aka new levels). Secondary objectives, such as avoiding hostile robots and destroying buildings, deepen gameplay by requiring players to split herds and use clever pathfinding and stealth. Though the controls and camera can be finicky, the surreal vibe, evolving/deepening gameplay, and co-op action are easily worth five bones. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

WiiWARE

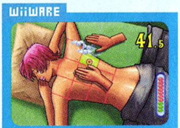
DEER CAPTOR

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Deer Captor clearly began life as Deer *Destroyer*; I can tell, because I don't normally capture deer by firing rifle rounds into their heads. (The game gives you bonus points for this.) Aside from this amusing incongruity, Deer Captor is a standard shooting-gallery snorefest; it's all about pointing the Wii Remote at an animal and pressing the button. A challenge mode, alternate weapon (crossbow), and multiplayer can't save a game so steeped in shallowness. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



ENJOY YOUR MASSAGE!

PUBLISHER: **MICROFORM**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Make no mistake—this isn't a game that simulates giving a massage. It's a Simon-esque memory exercise in which you mimic increasingly complex patterns over and over. Admittedly, the presentation is more interesting than it would be were the play field not a woman's back, but the simple gameplay quickly loses any appeal—and don't think for a second that there's anything else to hold your interest. Enjoy Your Massage? Not so much. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE

FANTASY SLOTS: ADVENTURE SLOTS AND GAMES

PUBLISHER: **BIG JOHN GAMES**
GENRE: **GAMBLING**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Slots is not a game; it's a Pavlovian trap designed to rob you first of your mind, then your money. Sure, it appeals to some, but gamers (i.e., people who enjoy interactivity that encompasses more than *pulling a lever*) are unlikely to fall into that group. So, while Fantasy Slots offers several slots versions, a handful of (awful) minigames, and appropriately garish graphics, it remains utterly vomitous. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE

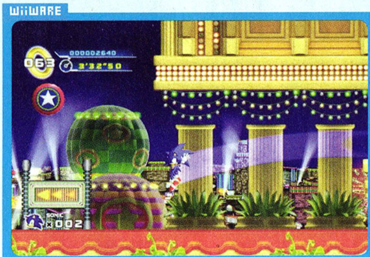
MY AQUARIUM 2

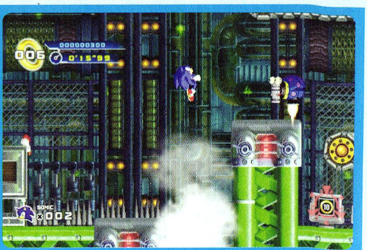
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

If Nintendo's AquaSpace (reviewed last issue) was a response to My Aquarium, consider this a reminder that Hudson was here first. Unfortunately, the perfect aquarium sim remains elusive; while My Aquarium 2 provides plenty of content—eight tanks to customize and populate, then share with friends—uninspired visuals, lifeless music, and minimalist fish facts keep the rewards to a minimum. And then there's paying for additional content; no thanks. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE





SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4: EPISODE I

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** Wii POINTS: **1,500**

Steve T's Pick

I never thought this day would come. After more than 15 years, Sonic the Hedgehog 4 is finally a reality. Is it as good as the Genesis games? No. The physics feel a bit off, the music isn't as catchy, and it lacks the charm of Sonic's pot-bellied days. But it's a damn fine game in its own right, and one worthy of the number at the end of its title.

There's been a growing misconception over the years that Sonic has forever been all about speed. That's only half of the equation. His original Genesis games were also great platformers, and Sonic 4 is the continuation of that line. I enjoy the Sonic Rush titles quite a bit, but those are more like side-scrolling rollercoaster rides. The pacing here is much more varied, with the occasional rollercoaster segment serving as your reward for completing some tricky platforming challenge. Also true to the classic games are multitiered level designs that offer opportunities for exploration, and lots of cool interactive devices that actually require skill rather than just propelling you forward. The game looks phenomenal, as well, with crisp, detailed backgrounds and a wonderfully bizarre aesthetic.

Oh, and though it's a strenuous undertaking, be sure to collect all of the Chaos Emeralds. Doing so unlocks a cool surprise that leads into Episode II.

Recommended

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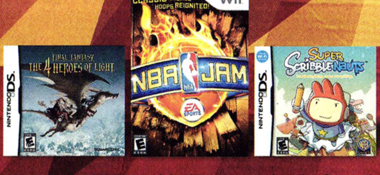
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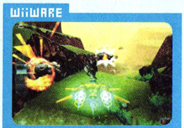


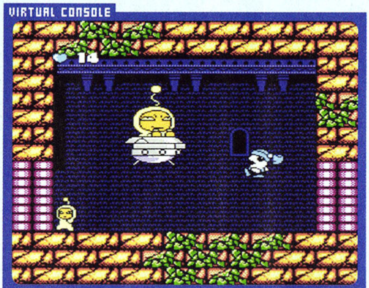
SPACE TREK

PUBLISHER: **CALARIS**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **700**

This is a cross between Star Fox and Broderbund's classic Choplifter, in which the goal was to fly over and rescue hostages. Any potential in that hybrid is lost the second the game begins. The amateurish voice acting and ugly graphics are almost tolerable when compared to the *incredibly* oversensitive (and non-configurable) motion controls. Additionally, the horrible targeting system will have you locking onto targets that are in completely different areas of the level. —**PHIL T.**

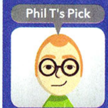
Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



UFOURIA: THE SAGA

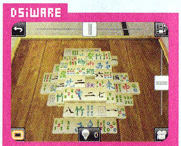
PLATFORM: **NES** PUBLISHER: **SUNSOFT**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1992**



Don't let Ufouria's hypercute visuals fool you. The gameplay in this Metroid-inspired adventure is incredibly solid. Like Nintendo's classic, Ufouria has a large, open world to explore, and items that you must find in order to proceed. Four playable characters, each with different skills, help keep the action varied. Even the bouncy music and colorful graphics are among the best the NES has to offer. This is the first time this great game has been released in the US—don't miss out.

Recommended

DSiWARE



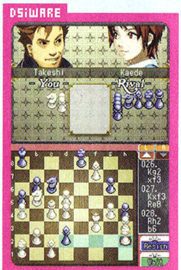
3D MAHJONG

PUBLISHER: **COSMIGO**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

For five bucks you get three games (at three difficulties): mahjong solitaire, memory, and matching. The latter two are throwaways suited only to (very young) children. The mahjong is...well, mahjong. Only in this case, the view can be iffy; the 3D option forces you to fiddle with the camera to reveal hidden tiles, while the 2D option doesn't maximize tile size (fortunately, you can reduce eye strain by choosing a nondefault tile set). —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



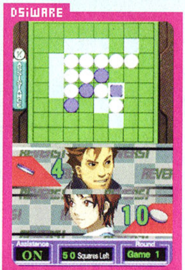
ABSOLUTE CHESS

PUBLISHER: **TASUKE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The value here is simply unreal; for two bucks you get a slick-looking chess engine, a cast of anime opponents (with adjustable skill levels), a grab bag of helpful instruction (including strategies), a challenge-based play mode, and DS Download Play. Outstanding. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



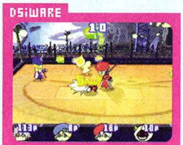
ABSOLUTE REVERSI

PUBLISHER: **TASUKE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Another value-heavy "Absolute" translation, featuring a cast of skill-adjustable anime opponents, challenge-based play, and DS Download Play multiplayer. A guide to opening strategies and an Assistance toggle (that reveals possible moves) welcome new players. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



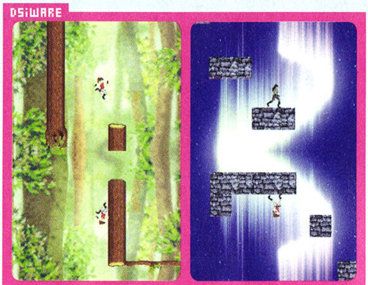
BLAYZBLOO: SUPER MELEE BRAWLERS BATTLE ROYALE

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

With its ridiculous title, Blayzbloo is meant to be a parody of Aksys Games's BlazBlue fighting series. Although it's a cute idea, the execution of this arena fighter is severely lacking. There are only three types of matches, but they feel mostly the same. The computer's AI switches between brutally cheap and braindead. The limited number of characters doesn't help the dull, repetitive gameplay. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



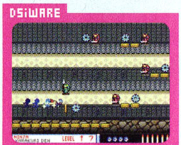
DIVERGENT SHIFT

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Divergent Shift is a platformer in the purest sense. The game is all about running, jumping, climbing, sliding, and kicking off of walls while avoiding treacherous obstacles and preventing yourself from falling to your death. There are no enemies—it's just you versus the environment. That's a lot more interesting than it sounds, since you're simultaneously controlling two characters—one on each screen—who are mirror images of each other. What you do with one character affects the other, and the result is uniquely satisfying, especially in the stages where the characters are perfectly synced up. The compelling action more than makes up for the lackluster visuals. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



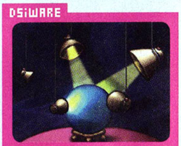
G.G SERIES NINJA KARAKURI DEN

PUBLISHER: **GENTERPRISE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Ninja Karakuri Den takes its cues from simple static-screen arcade games from the early '80s. Your ninja hops automatically, and your goal is to guide him around each stage to slash gears (!?) or defeat the occasional boss before heading to the exit. Though there's charm in the superretro gameplay and visuals, the game is perhaps too basic; it gets old fast. At least the price is low. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



HINTS HUNTER

PUBLISHER: **CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Hints Hunter is a bit like WarioWare in the sense that every stage requires you to interact with the scene in a different way and you don't really know what you're trying to do until you fool around with it a little bit. The difference is that Hints Hunter is intentionally obtuse; this is a brainteaser, and it's possible to get totally stuck if you can't interpret the clues. There's little replay value, though, and the limitations on saving are lame. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

at the twilight's last gleaming,
3020
at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars

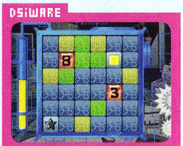
JUST SING! NATIONAL ANTHEMS

PUBLISHER: **ENGINE SOFTWARE**
GENRE: **MUSIC/RHYTHM**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The concept of a portable karaoke game is not without merit, and one based around national anthems is actually pretty cool. Unfortunately, this bare-bones game features a measly five songs and no options except to, er, just sing. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



MATCH UP!

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Remember the board game Memory? Match Up! is a lot like that—flip over cards and try to find matching pairs. The concept gets old quickly, especially since the card designs are just so darn dull. By round 30 or so you'll feel like you're engaging in some tedious mental chore rather than playing a game. The Match Machine mode is a bit more successful for long-term fun, but dumb luck plays too big a role to make the game really satisfying. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

11
12
STOCK
Stocks
Produce
19
1

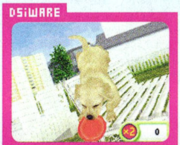
MY FARM

PUBLISHER: **BIP MEDIA**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Given its low price, My Farm seems like a nice, affordable farming sim. You get what you pay for, however, as there is little to do. The entire game boils down to "buy animal, raise it until it becomes profitable, sell animal, buy new animal." It's repetitive and it gets dull quick. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



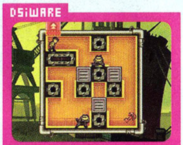
PETZ DOGZ FAMILY

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Covering the same ground as Nintendogs, but not as well, the downloadable iteration of Ubisoft's Petz Dogz series offers three dog breeds and a limited slate of minigames. The obstacle-course activity is barely interactive—a disappointment. The flying-disc game, on the other hand, dishes out a real-feeling disc-fling play mechanic with entertaining reactions from your pet. Feeding, breeding, and accessory-buying are standard pet-simulation fare. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



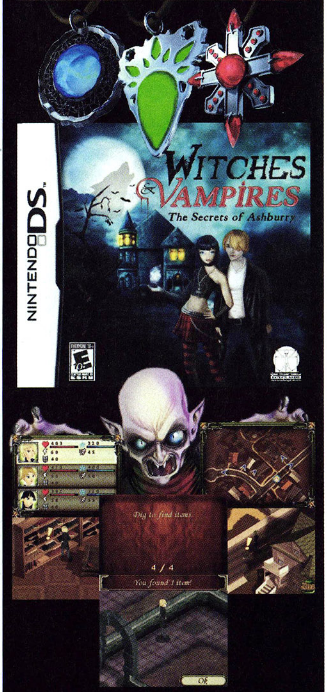
TURN: THE LOST ARTIFACT

PUBLISHER: **CREATIVE PATTERNS**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

While not a direct clone, TURN feels a lot like Sokoban, that block-pushing game released under many different names over the years. The basic gameplay (grab a key in a maze and head for the exit) is made far more interesting by the ability to rotate each stage. This results in some deviously tricky puzzles as you must also manipulate falling boxes to take out foes but avoid injury yourself. It's not easy, but it's fun. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

WITCHES & VAMPIRES
The Secrets of Ashburry



Witches & Vampires is an adventure game that tells the story of three magical half siblings and their struggle against evil. A mysterious villain wants to steal a magic amulet from their mother to achieve infinite power.

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Fantasy Violence,
Mild Language

only
$19.99

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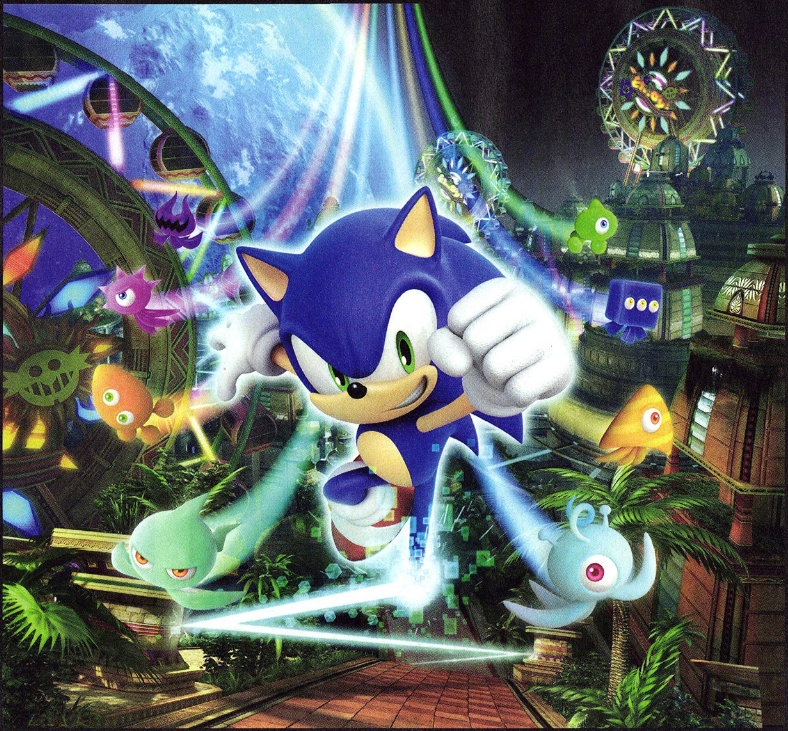
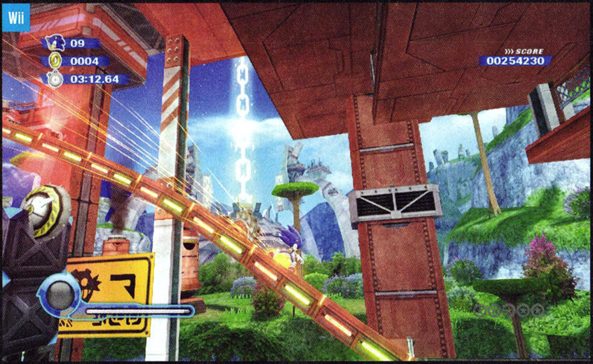


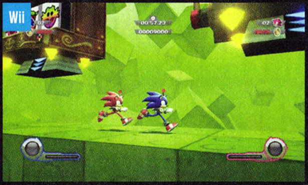
SONIC COLORS

It's not just about blue anymore.

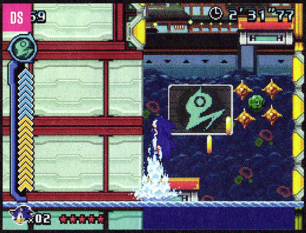
WHEN SONIC COLORS begins, you might be tempted to believe that Sonic the Hedgehog's archnemesis Dr. Robotnik (aka Dr. Eggman) has turned over a new leaf. After all, he's built an amusement park in space. And it's not just any amusement park—it's the giant-sized Eggman's Incredible Interstellar Amusement Park. In fact, it's so big that each region of the park is actually a planet. But guess what? In reality, it is (*spoiler alert!*) a nefarious plot to capture alien creatures called Wisps so Eggman can suck out their energy and conquer the universe.

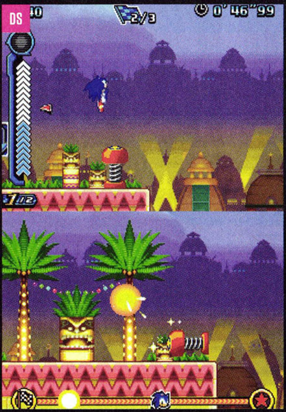
As you've probably read in our previous





[Above] Eggman's Sonic Sim is an unlockable mode featuring two-player faux-hedgehog action.





coverage of Sonic Colors, the Wisps aren't just a plot point; they come in multiple varieties, and each Wisp is ready to lend Sonic its special powers to put an end to Eggman's scheme. (Think of Wisps as the Sonic equivalent of Mario's various suits.) White Wisps simply power up your boost gauge; yellow Wisps allow you to drill through the earth; cyan Wisps let you move almost instantaneously via laser beam; green Wisps let you hover and travel by chains of rings; blue Wisps turn certain blocks into rings and vice versa; orange Wisps let you launch yourself skyward on a rocket; pink Wisps enable you to transform into a blade that can travel on walls and ceilings; purple Wisps turn you into a berserker that chomps through anything in its path; and red Wisps (exclusive to the Nintendo DS handheld) allow you to harness the power of flame.

In some parts of the game you'll need to use a certain ability to get through a level, but most of the time the Wisps are optional. The bulk of the gameplay is the stuff that the Sonic series is traditionally known for: high-speed thrills (from both side-view and behind-the-back perspectives) intertwined with precision jumping and other slower-paced platforming moments.

Of course, each of the game's fantastic worlds has its own unique obstacles and challenges, too. On Sweet Mountain you'll run through a candy factory gone wild (Willy Wonka, eat your heart out!), while in the Starlight Carnival you'll ricochet off of satellites and floating debris, and race through space as a pathway materializes in front of you. Planet Wisp, on the other hand, is lush and beautiful—full of trees, grass, and rivers—but packed with spinning spike-ball traps and switch puzzles. Other levels include Aquarium Park—where you'll visit a neon-lit feudal-Japanese city under the sea—and the devilish Asteroid Coaster, where you'll run on a Saturn-like planet's rings, deal with reversed gravity, and avoid taking a one-way trip into toxic green goo.

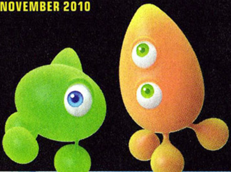
Whether you're playing on the Wii console or the Nintendo DS handheld, you'll get to experience the same story and themed environments, but the level design will be completely different. Furthermore, while each world in the Wii version consists of six acts (some short, some long) and a boss, the DS worlds consist of two lengthy stages and a boss stage, along with two optional challenges (with goals such as collecting a certain number of Wisps or finishing the level within a limited time).

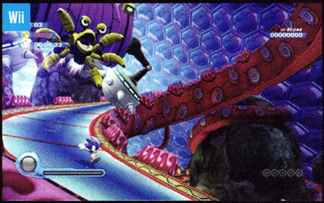
But there's more to do in Sonic Colors than just finish the levels. The Wii version allows you to team up with a second player in the virtual-reality-inspired Eggman's Sonic Sim mode, or challenge every level in sequence via the Egg Shuttle; the DS version lets you tackle Time Attack mode or compete against another player, either locally or over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Both versions also contain hidden tokens to collect in each level.

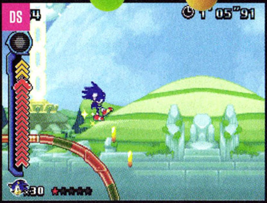
If there's one criticism to levy about the game, it's in regards to the storytelling. There's nothing wrong with the plot (or the absolutely beautiful CG), but the cut-scenes are chock-full of cringe-inducing jokes that may have been written by an actual hedgehog. Fortunately, the gameplay is what really matters, and judging by what we've seen so far, Sonic Colors has that part nailed.

—CHRIS H.

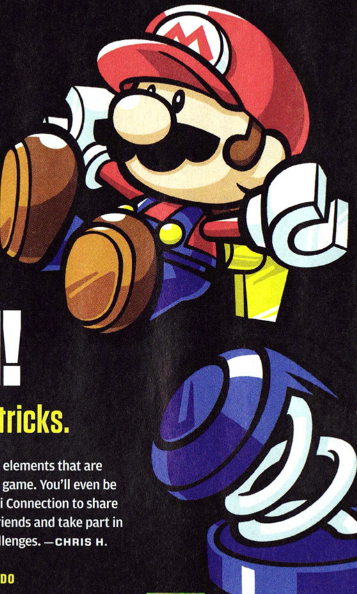
Wii DS PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SONIC TEAM (Wii), DIMPS (DS)**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**







MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG: MINI-LAND MAYHEM!



Proof that you can teach old rivals new tricks.

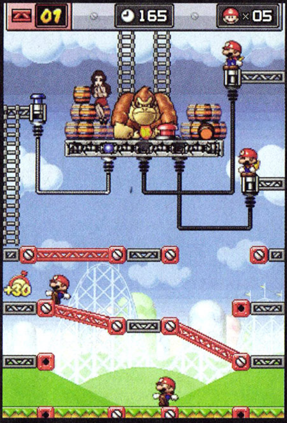
MARIO IS A busy guy. He's got galaxies to save and Koopas to stomp and go-karts to race. So when Donkey Kong kidnaps Pauline (yes, the very same Pauline that got kidnapped in the original Donkey Kong), Mario doesn't go after the big ape himself. Instead, he sends wind-up Mini Mario toys to put a stop to the monkey business.

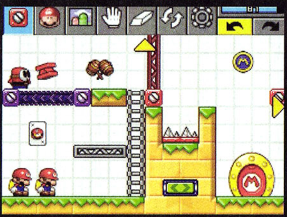
The puzzle-meets-platforming action that follows is similar to that of Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again! for DSiWare. Like in that title, you can tell the Mini Marios when to start moving, but after that you have no control over them; they're just gonna keep going—climbing ladders, hopping up ledges, and the like—until they make it to the stage exit or get smashed in the process. Fortunately, you have a lot of control over the environment. Using the touch screen, you can place girders, spring pads, conveyor belts, warp pipes, and more to help the mindless Mini Marios bounce over spiked pits, avoid enemies, and make it to the exit intact. What objects you have access to depends on the level, but you have a lot more interactive freedom than in past Mario vs. DK games; you can place girders at angles, for example, and you can determine the direction a conveyor belt moves by the way you place it.

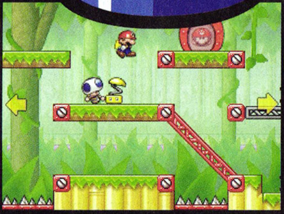
Some stages add new wrinkles to the formula. Occasionally you'll have to guide Mini Peach, Mini Toad, and Mini Pauline alongside Mini Mario (they each have different exits to get to), and in other stages you'll encounter locked exits that can be opened only by the character that holds the key. Additionally, each of the game's eight worlds ends in a boss battle against Donkey Kong; in these stages, you'll have to avoid DK's mischievous attacks while moving your Mini Marios into designated positions.

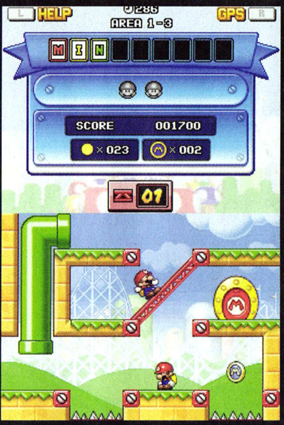
If you're looking for more action, you can create your own levels from scratch using the series's trademark level editor. There are multiple level sizes and environment types to choose from, and you'll have access to all the enemies, obstacles, and interactive elements that are found in the single-player game. You'll even be able to use Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection to share your custom levels with friends and take part in special level-creation challenges. —**CHRIS H.**

DS
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NST**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**









[Left] Shy Guys! Spikes! The custom-level editor lets you place hazards as you see fit.

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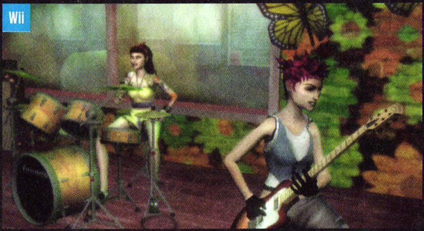
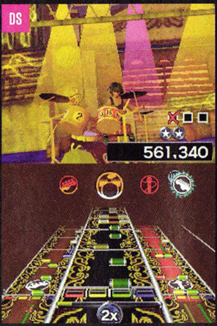
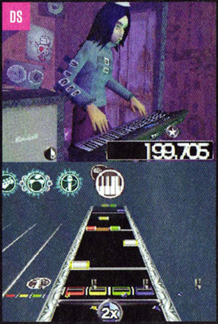


[Below] The DS version will test your multitasking skills.





ROCK BAND 3

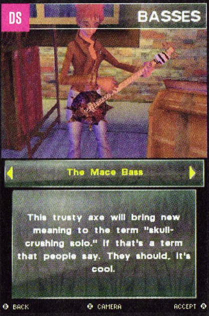
Rock 'n' roll wherever you go

THOSE WHO HAVE been following our coverage of Rock Band 3 know that the Wii game is very advanced. Thanks to the new Pro mode, the pro peripherals (including a 25-key keyboard and a six-string guitar), and the many in-game tutorials, you might just learn how to play real-life instruments. And with an 83-song soundtrack, Rock Band 3 will keep things interesting as you learn. (Although you can also play all of the downloadable songs from the previous two Rock Band titles, the non-Rock Band 3 tracks are not Pro mode-compatible.) Of course, those looking to have the basic Rock Band experience can do that, too—you can use the five-button guitar controllers and four-pad drum kits you already have.

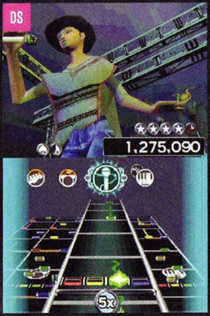
Naturally, the Nintendo DS title is quite different. As with the DS version of LEGO Rock Band, you don't have any accessories; instead you use the handheld's buttons to play. (Specifically, you press A and X, and up and left on the Control Pad; you activate Overdrive by tapping B or down.) And in the single-player game, you have control over four note highways—bass, drums, vocals, and guitar/keyboard—swapping between them (by tapping L or R) as you work your way through the game's 25 songs. The cooperative mode limits you to just one highway, however, with each of the four players responsible for a single instrument. If you're feeling competitive, Rock Band 3 for DS offers a head-to-head mode, as well. You're allowed to jump from track to track as in the single-player experience; if you and your opponent play on the same track, you can either duke it out by trying to hit more notes than your rival, or quickly bump your foe by activating Overdrive.

We were able to spend only a little while playing both versions of Rock Band 3, but we won't have to wait much longer to play more; both games' releases are just around the corner.

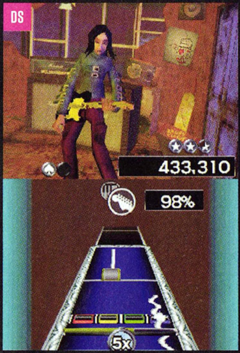
—**JUSTIN C.**

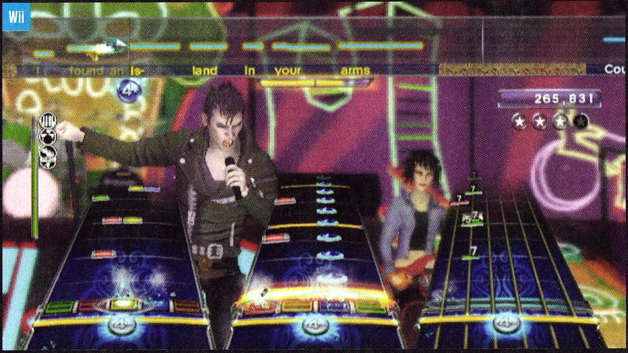


This trusty axe will bring new meaning to the term "skull-crushing solo." If that's a term that people say. They should. It's cool.



Wii DS PUBLISHER: **MTV GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **HARMONIX (Wii), BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT (DS)** RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2010**



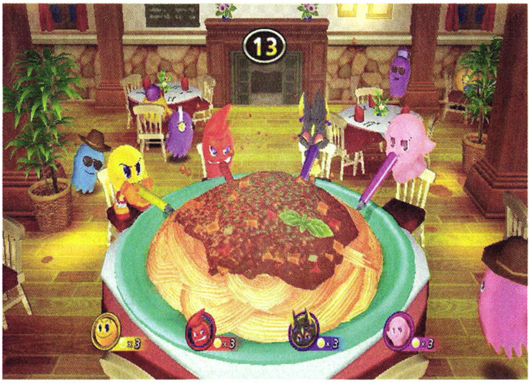


PAC-MAN PARTY

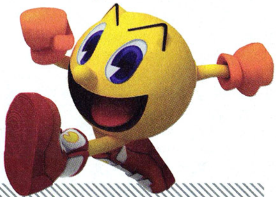
Cookies: almost as tasty as ghosts

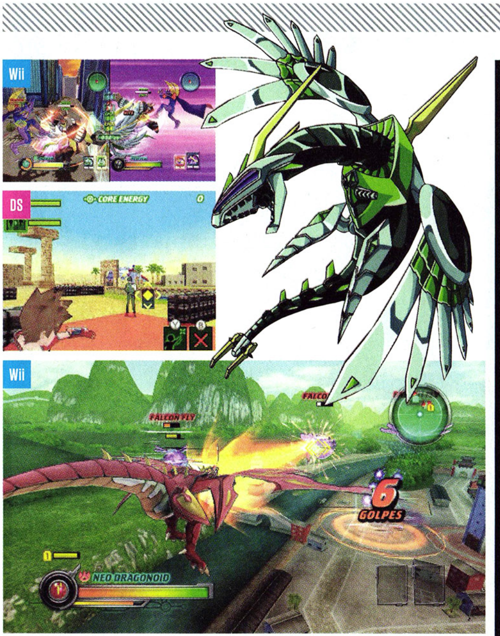
Thirty years have passed since the release of Pac-Man in arcades, so Namco Bandai has created Pac-Man Party—essentially a Mario Party-style minigame collection starring Pac-Man and pals—to commemorate the occasion. Players can progress solo through all 48 activities in Story mode, compete with up to three friends in Party mode, or simply play the minigame of their choosing. Like in Mario Party you move along a game board, but here your primary goal is to accrue wealth (in the form of precious cookies) via minigames such as slicing flying fruit, fishing, and even twirling spaghetti. Yes, delicious baked goods are the most valuable commodity in Pac-Man Party, and they allow players to purchase castles on spaces they land on, Monopoly-style. Outside of the minigames, you can play Namco arcade classics such as Galaga, Dig Dug, and (of course) Pac-Man in the game's Classic mode. Now that's what we call a party!
—**CODY M.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
RELEASE DATE: **NOVEMBER 2010**



Even at 30 years old, Pac-Man rejects the notion of wearing pants.





These Bakugan aren't just roly-poly balls; they're fully armed and ready for battle!

BAKUGAN: DEFENDERS OF THE CORE

Where no Bakugan has gone before

Last year's Bakugan Battle Brawlers was essentially a straight-up digital interpretation of the popular collectible-toy game. Not so with Bakugan: Defenders of the Core; this time you'll get to take your transforming, battling beasts on a full-fledged interactive adventure. When you're in battle you'll control one of 32 Bakugan creatures and use weak attacks, strong attacks, projectiles, and card-based special moves to beat down your opponents. When you're not in combat, you'll play as an original character (who you get to name and customize) and use gadgets that enable you to distract enemies, turn invisible, see infrared beams, and more as you engage in stealth-based exploration. Popular series heroes such as Dan and Marucho remain integral to the storyline, naturally, and if you want to just get straight into the action, you can fire up the game's Battle Arena mode for one- or two-player competition.
—**CHRIS H.**

Wii DS
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **NOW PRODUCTION**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**

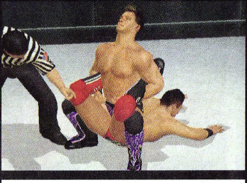
WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2011

It's your WWE Universe. Now fight for it!

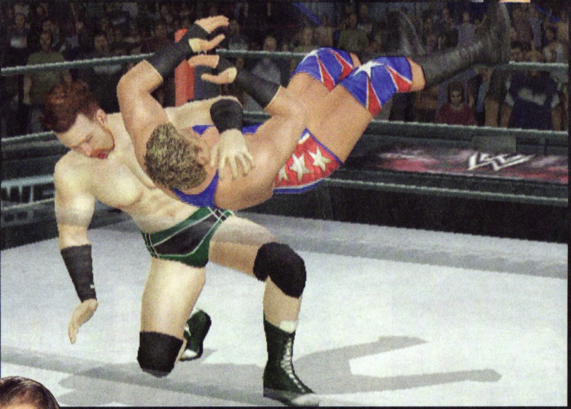
THQ'S LONG-RUNNING WWE series has always provided solid in-ring action. If there are any aspects in which the games have been lacking, it's in the rivalries, feuds, and drama (read: backstage conflicts) that WWE programming is known for. That's going to change in WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011, thanks to the game's new WWE Universe feature. The mode generates a season calendar—complete with shows such as Raw, SmackDown, and Superstars—and creates matchups based on how you play the game in Exhibition mode. If you don't like the lineups, you can edit them or add your own custom matches, and you can skip past any matches you aren't interested in. But as they say, anything can happen in WWE—and that includes sneak attacks during character entrances, unlikely allies coming to the rescue, and low-blow disqualification finishes that lead to brutal beatdowns. In short, WWE Universe could be the full-fledged career simulation that many fans have been waiting for.

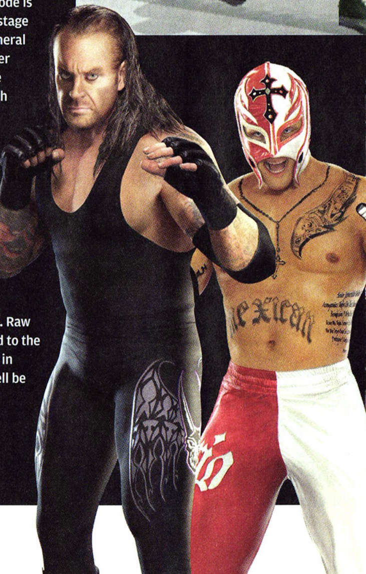
Of course, developer Yuke's isn't neglecting the game's other features. The roster includes more than 70 superstars—from veterans like Shawn Michaels and Chris Jericho to newcomers such as Sheamus, Yoshi Tatsu, and Drew McIntyre—and several returning modes are being thoroughly enhanced. In the infamous Hell in a Cell match, for example, you'll have access to weapons, and you'll be able to slam opponents right through the cell wall. The popular Road to WrestleMania story mode is back, too, now with free-roaming backstage segments; you'll be able to visit the general manager, start a brawl with any wrestler you come across, interrupt a backstage promo, or engage in side activities (such as rescuing a stagehand who's falling from a ladder).

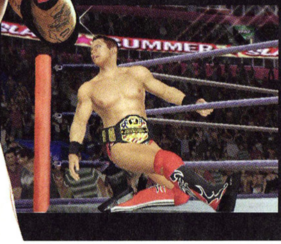
The gameplay is being tweaked, as well. You no longer have to press a modifier button to vary your grapple type; instead, you'll execute quick grapple moves against fresh opponents, and automatically perform strong grapples on your adversaries once you've worn them down. Though the refinements to WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011 are minor adjustments (as opposed to the sweeping changes that have been made in previous years), the game could very well be series's best Wii entry yet. —**CHRIS H.**



[Above] Chris Jericho applies a decent and honorable submission hold.







Wii **PUBLISHER: THQ**
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2010

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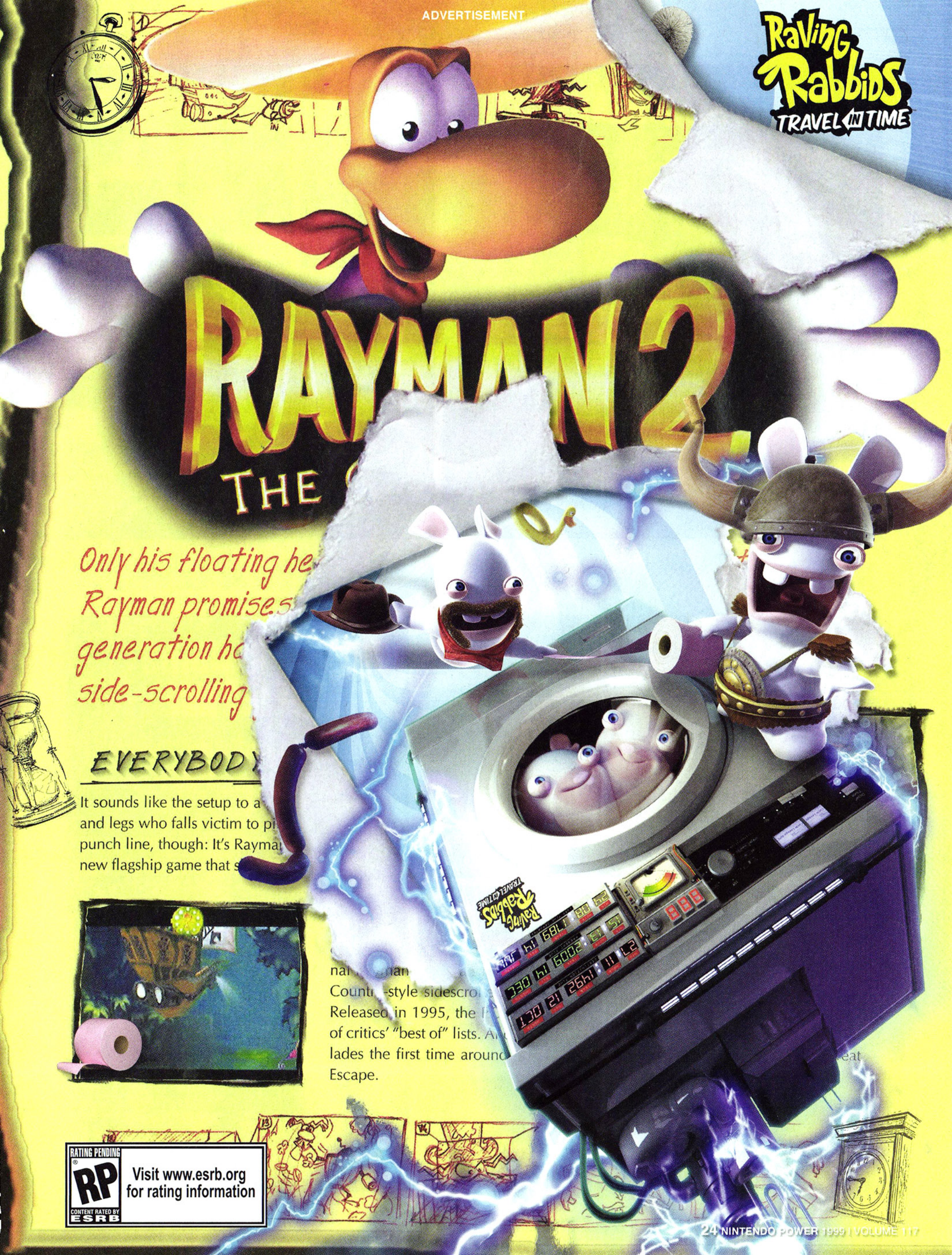
Raving Rabbids
TRAVEL IN TIME
RAYMAN 2
THE G
Raving Rabbids
TRAVEL IN TIME

Only his floating he
Rayman promises
generation ho
side-scrolling

EVERYBOD

It sounds like the setup to a
and legs who falls victim to pi
punch line, though: It's Rayma
new flagship game that s

nal Rayman
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Released in 1995, the P
of critics' "best of" lists. A
lades the first time around
eat
Escape.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org
for rating information

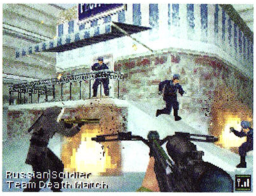
CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

Aim for the top

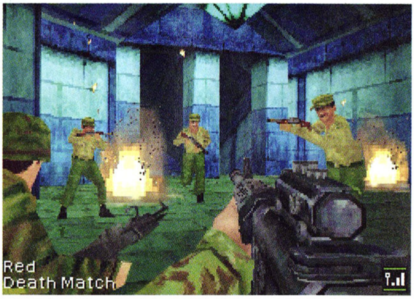
Because first-person-shooter franchise Call of Duty is so huge on home consoles, the handheld iterations are overshadowed. It's a shame, too, because the Nintendo DS games are often pretty darn good. The latest, Call of Duty: Black Ops (which, despite its title has a separate narrative from the Wii game's, although it also takes place during the Cold War), seems to improve upon its predecessors due in part to its new control scheme. Instead of aiming with the stylus (as in the previous portable Call of Duty releases), you aim via the A, B, X, and Y Buttons. You can still use the stylus controls if you want, of course, and the touch screen is still utilized to swap weapons in either scheme.

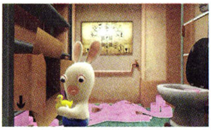
You'll have ample opportunity to get used to the controls. In addition to 16 single-player missions, Black Ops features Challenge and Arcade modes, as well as a separate two-player co-op campaign and a six-player online versus mode complete with equippable perks (a staple of the console games). —**JUSTIN C.**

DS
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
RELEASE DATE: **NOVEMBER 2010**

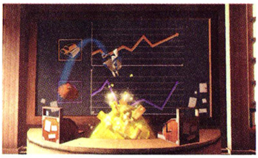


[Above and below] You have a wide array of weapons to choose from in multiplayer.





[Above] Believe it or not, this bathroom is where you access your save file. Go figure!



RAVING RABBIDS TRAVEL IN TIME

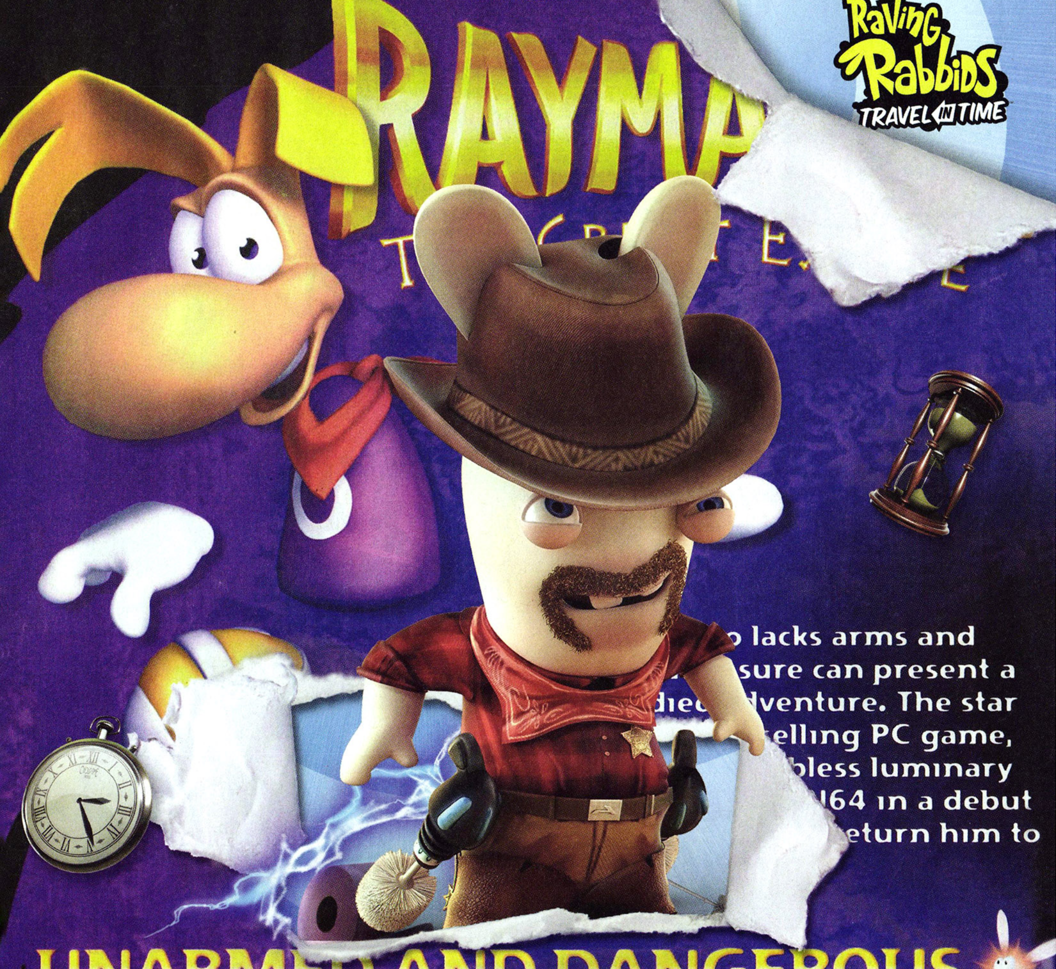
To quote Leonardo DaVinci: "Bwaaah!"

The deranged and dreaded Rabbids are back, and they're terrorizing not just space, but this time...uh...time! In the aptly named Raving Rabbids Travel in Time, you and up to three friends are invited to a revered museum of historical portraits. At each portrait you can hop into a clothes washer/time machine (because hot tubs are for chumps) and travel to that portrait's time period to—what else?—play a minigame. The title boasts 25 minigames (not including the games you can play in the halls of the museum) that run the gamut from avoiding getting frozen by Neanderthal ice farts to flying high above Benjamin Franklin in a thunderstorm to collect balloons.

Each hall of the museum represents a different flavor of minigame—platforming, shooting, flying, co-op, and fishing (which requires the Wii MotionPlus accessory)—and though some of the games have mechanics similar to those of other minigame collections for Wii, each boasts its own Rabbid style and embodies the series's giggly humor and absurdity. —**DAVID M.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT PARIS**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**

ADVERTISEMENT


Raving Rabbids
TRAVEL IN TIME
RAYMA
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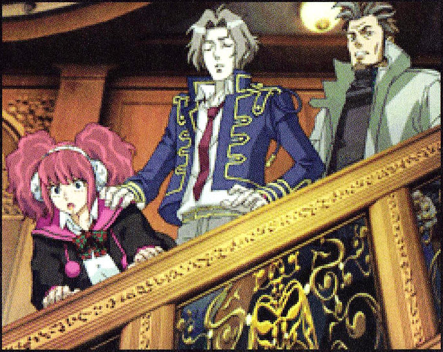
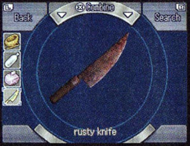
UNARMED AND DANGEROUS

He may be new to Nintendo, but Rayman already has a four-million selling PC game under his belt. That is, he would if he had a waist to buckle one around. Rayman is Ubi Soft's fantastical mascot who, instead of sporting a neck, two arms and two legs, has a torso that's magically connected to his floating head, hands and feet. Dipping his disembodied toes in one-player Rayman 2: The Great Escape, Rayman skis, rides missiles, scrambles off toppling bridges, and escapes other impending hazards put in the game to keep the action rollicking at a frantic clip. Set in hand-illustrated worlds resembling the lushest of Disneyscapes, Rayman flirts so well with cartoon elements that Ubi Soft has produced *Rayman, The TV Series*, set to air next year. By then, Rayman 2, with its proven formula of fast-paced action and spirited hijinks, no doubt will have gamers up in arms, awaiting anxiously for its premiere.

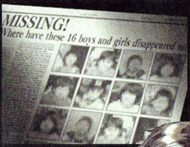
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

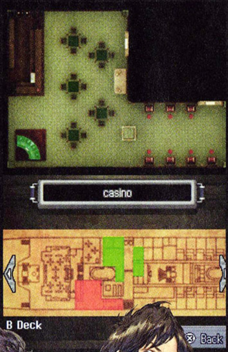
Visit www.esrb.org for rating information

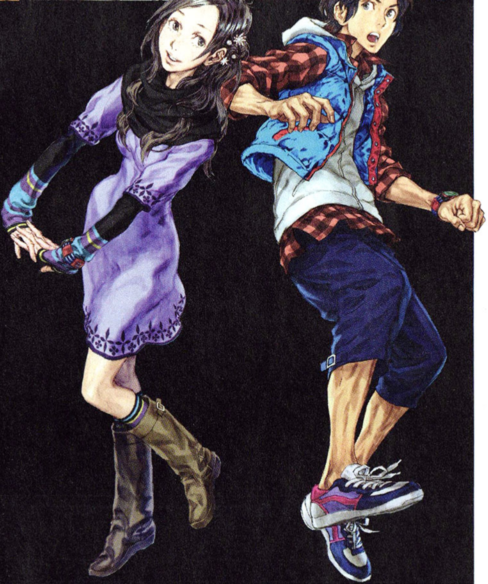




[Above] Definitely don't use this to slice your pork roast.



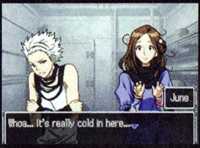




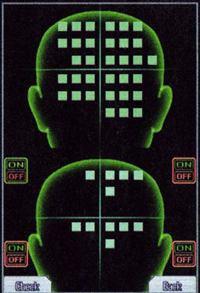
NINE HOURS, NINE PERSONS, NINE DOORS

And nine hundred and ninety-nine ways to die

THE LAST THING Junpei remembered was seeing a man in a hood and gas mask in his apartment. Now he's on the lower decks of a sinking ship, there's a bomb in his small intestine, and some lunatic has announced that he has only nine hours to puzzle his way out of a watery grave. There are eight other people in the same boat (literally), but outside of an old elementary-school classmate, they're all strangers who seem to be holding back a secret or two. And the rules of the game make it pretty clear that not everyone will be making it home alive.


June

Whoa... It's really cold in here...



Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors (999) was developed by Chunsoft, the Japanese company that invented the modern visual-novel genre but rarely manages to get its games localized for Western audiences. If 999 followed the usual Chunsoft template, it would consist of nothing but graphics and text with just enough *Choose Your Own Adventure*-style moments to allow players to make the story their own. But while 999 does feature long stretches of non-interactive storytelling, it breaks them up with some satisfying adventure-game segments. You can thoroughly explore each room of the ship with your stylus, revealing items, clues, and keypads that you can use to solve dozens of tricky puzzles.

With art and character designs by former Capcom artist Kinu Nishimura, Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors has a pleasing look, and even Professor Layton would tip his hat to the cleverness of its puzzles. But it's the depth of the story in 999 that has us excited. Kotaro Uchikoshi's script is packed with suspense and intrigue, while drawing inspiration from such left-field sources as the 1898 novel *Futility*, the mysterious crystallization properties of glycerin, and the historical sinking of the RMS *Gigantic*. Even on a platform that has hosted such oddball experiments in gaming narrative as Time Hollow and Hotel Dusk, 999 truly feels like something special. —CASEY L.

DS PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT**
RELEASE DATE: **2010**

ADVERTISEMENT

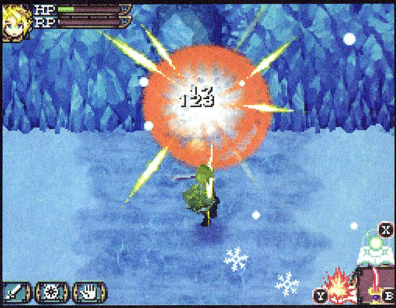
Raving Rabbids
TRAVEL IN TIME

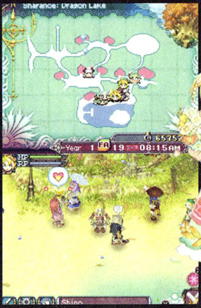
When BUNNIES ATTACK!!

The Raving Rabbids are coming to Wii and neither Rayman nor conventional game design is safe!

ve Thomason

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org for rating information





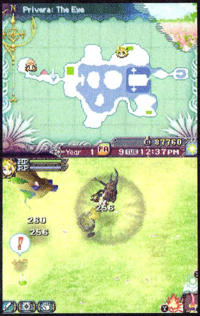
RUNE FACTORY 3: A FANTASY HARVEST MOON

Half man. Half beast. All agriculture.

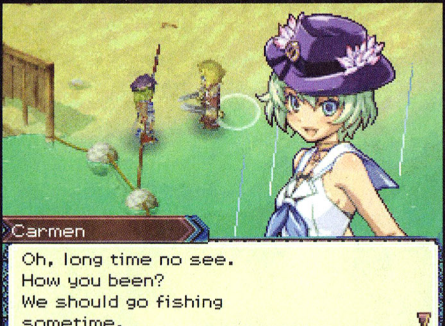
IF THERE'S A knock against the mainline Harvest Moon titles, it's this: they're too realistic. Pulling weeds, planting seeds, and all those other constant, repetitive tasks on the farm can feel a lot like *work*. Well, except without the actual sweat, dirt, and danger of being kicked by angry cows. The Rune Factory games go a way toward solving that problem. Yes, you're a farmer, but you're also a fantasy hero, and you've got some things to do besides wait for the turnips to grow.

The series's latest entry presents a twist on the style of the earlier games. Our last few heroes ventured down into dungeons to save their village from monsters—easy enough. The amnesiac protagonist in this Rune Factory does the same, but he soon learns that he has a secret. He's a monster too—or part monster, at least—and has a mysterious Transform spell that he doesn't remember what to do with. When he does remember, interesting things begin to happen, especially to the bad guys he can rumble with in his monstrous form.

For those who'd rather enjoy the more peaceful pursuits traditional to Harvest Moon games, Rune Factory 3 will still oblige you. In fact, there's something to be said for just admiring the scenery. The background graphics are almost impossibly beautiful, filled with lavish detail in a softly colorful style, and Neverland has cured the slowdown problems that plagued earlier games. Even during hectic dungeon battles, the 3D engine holds up just fine. If you want to do more on your farm than pull weeds, Rune Factory 3 will deliver. **—DAVID S.**



DS PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **NEVERLAND**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010**



Carmen

Oh, long time no see.
How you been?
We should go fishing
sometime.

As in the previous Rune Factory games, there's plenty to do. Farming, fishing, cooking, fighting monsters—it's your call.

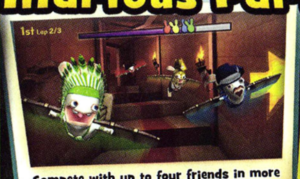
FEED YOUR HEAD

To craft new weapons, potions, food, and other stuff in Rune Factory 3, you need to learn recipes. How do you do that? Eat some recipe bread, of course. Seriously—nosh on a loaf, and you'll learn to make a brand-new item. If only real life were so easy, or so tasty....

Raving Rabbids™ TRAVEL IN TIME

Have a Blast in the Past in this Hilarious Party Game!

Play in a wide range of the greatest moments in history!



Compete with up to four friends in more than 20 hilarious new mini-games.

Customize your rabbid with over 30 wacky costumes.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org for rating information

IN STORES NOV. 9TH!

VISIT: www.rabbids.com/travel-in-time

Wii™

UBISOFT

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SPECIAL SECTION

25 YEARS OF THE NES

Nintendo
SELECT START
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

CELEBRATING THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY OF THE GAME SYSTEM THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING!

On October 18, 1985, the Nintendo Entertainment System (better known as the NES) was released in North America—and the world of video games was **never the same again**. The NES wasn't the first game console, but it was the one that brought the hobby back from the brink. After all, an oversaturated market and a glut of bad software on systems such as the Atari 2600 made the home gaming industry collapse a few years earlier, and many people thought the video game "fad" was over. But Nintendo proved that wasn't the case.

Though the NES was originally released in only a few regional test markets—a full-fledged national rollout didn't occur until the following year—people who laid their hands on the console couldn't get enough. Not only were the graphics and sound **light-years ahead** of what players had experienced on the previous generation of systems, but the games themselves were much more sophisticated. Video games were no longer single-environment affairs augmented by bleeps and bloops; they were involved worlds with catchy tunes and captivating gameplay. And who could forget **innovations** like the brilliant NES controller or the ill-fated Robotic Operating Buddy peripheral? Even at its most unusual, the NES offered something new, different, and fun.

The rest, of course, is history. The 8-bit machine proved remarkably popular with gamers and game makers alike, and the system gave rise to **beloved franchises** such as Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, Metroid, Mega Man, Castlevania, Final Fantasy, Dragon Warrior, and many more that are still adored to this day. It's pretty safe to say that if it hadn't been for the NES, video gaming wouldn't be the powerhouse **phenomenon** it is today, and there'd be no Nintendo Power for you to be reading right now. To celebrate the 25 years since the launch of the NES, we're taking a look back at the system, its games, and everything that made the era so memorable—and we're doing it with the help of some of gaming's **most notable creators**. So strap on your Power Glove, plug in your Zapper, and enjoy this look back at one of the most influential systems in the annals of gaming.

A True Classic

Lots of great things came out of that two-toned-gray box.

It's true that a video game system is only as good as the software it plays, but there's no denying the fact that the NES hardware has an appeal all its own. Released in Japan as the Famicom (Family Computer), the 8-bit machine received a thorough cosmetic redesign when it came to North America as the Nintendo Entertainment System a couple of years later. With its front-loading "zero-force" cartridge slot, angular design, and two-toned gray color scheme with red and black highlights, the original NES was unlike any gaming console that had come before or has come since—and its iconic look can be seen on hats, T-shirts, and belt buckles to this day.

But at least as important as how the NES looked is what it had inside. After all—a fantastic game idea doesn't mean much if the hardware can't back it up. Admittedly, 16-color graphics in 256-by-240-pixel resolution running at 1.79 MHz aren't exactly cutting-edge tech by today's standards, but 25 years ago that was all you needed to make a great video game. Even when the NES launched, the hardware allowed developers to create titles that were a huge improvement over those available for previous systems, and as the years passed and programmers were able to get more mileage out of the hardware, the resultant games looked, sounded, and played better and better.

Of course, you can't talk about NES hardware without mentioning the simple but brilliant controller—which perfectly balanced functionality and accessibility—or the various system bundles, such as the popular Action Set (the NES, two controllers, the Zapper, and the Super Mario Bros./Duck Hunt cartridge), the Deluxe Set (the NES, two controllers, the Zapper, R.O.B., Duck Hunt, and Gyromite) or the Power Set (the NES, two controllers, the Zapper, the Power Pad, and a Super Mario Bros./Duck Hunt/World Class Track Meet cartridge).

Here's a closer look at the machine that revolutionized the gaming industry and redefined fun for the latter half of the 1980s.

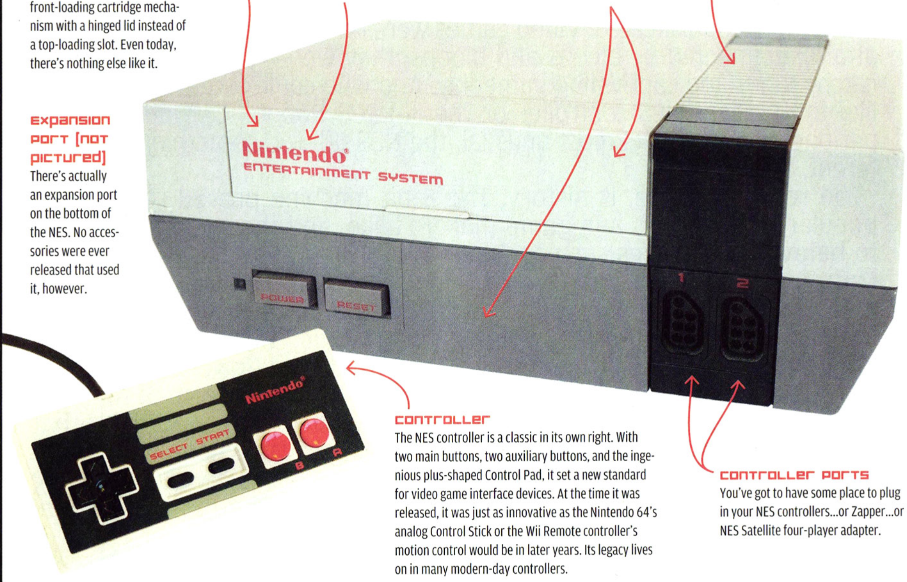
Front-Loading Cartridge Slot
Unlike earlier game systems—or Nintendo's own Japanese Famicom—the NES utilized a front-loading cartridge mechanism with a hinged lid instead of a top-loading slot. Even today, there's nothing else like it.

Nintendo Logo
Just so you don't forget what system you're playing all those awesome games on, the name is right there on the front. The red logo added a bit of variety to the color scheme, too.

Two-Toned-Gray Shell
Just one shade of gray would be boring. Two shades of gray is what it's all about!

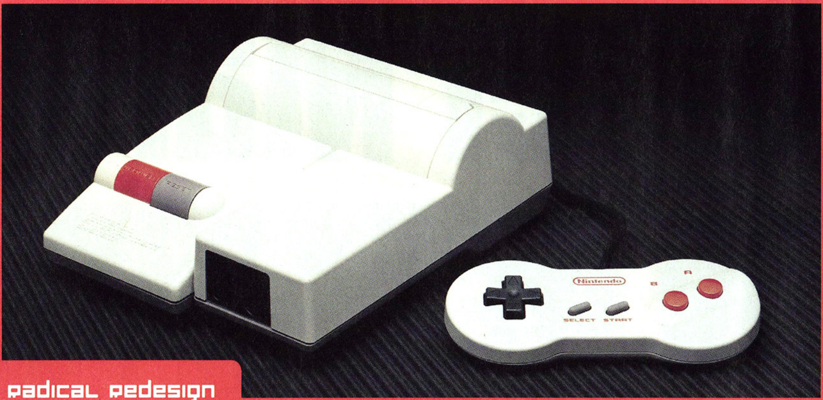
Ridged Top
Not only does this row of ridges look cool, but since they provide ventilation, they keep the system cool, too.

Expansion Port (Not Pictured)
There's actually an expansion port on the bottom of the NES. No accessories were ever released that used it, however.



Controller
The NES controller is a classic in its own right. With two main buttons, two auxiliary buttons, and the ingenious plus-shaped Control Pad, it set a new standard for video game interface devices. At the time it was released, it was just as innovative as the Nintendo 64's analog Control Stick or the Wii Remote controller's motion control would be in later years. Its legacy lives on in many modern-day controllers.

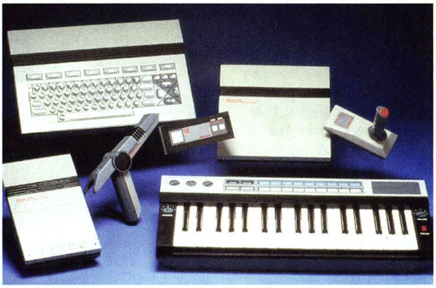
Controller Ports
You've got to have some place to plug in your NES controllers...or Zapper...or NES Satellite four-player adapter.



Radical Redesign

After many productive years on store shelves—and more than 30 million systems sold—the NES was given a significant revamp in 1993. Abandoning the boxy design and the front-loading cartridge slot, the new version of the NES boasted a more stylish look, with rounded edges and curved or angled surfaces. Even the traditional NES controllers were redesigned with more curves to be ergonomically comfortable. And though the system's core components didn't change, the machine did receive some alterations under the hood, including consolidated circuit boards and the replacement of the standard audio/video outputs with a proprietary port. Though the redesigned NES was met with mixed reactions at the time it was released, it's become a highly desirable collector's item.

SHOT
HIT
SCORE



[Above] This NES prototype, known as the Nintendo AVS (Advanced Video System), featured multiple components and varied significantly from the final NES design. It can be seen on display in the Nintendo World store in New York. [Left] A promotional image for the NES Deluxe Set shows the system, Game Paks, controllers, Zapper, and even R.O.B. in all their glory.

GAME BOY
GAME BOY ADVANCE SP
Nintendo

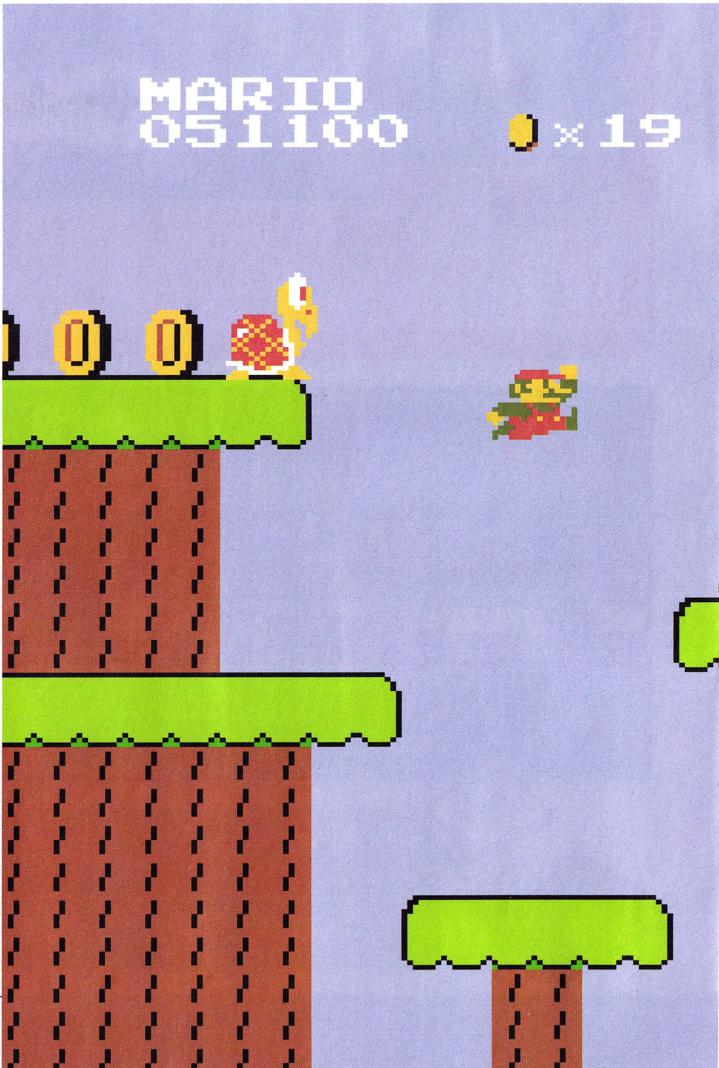
NES Advanced

Although its last game—Wario's Woods—was released in December 1994, the NES refused to fade away. In fact, Nintendo paid homage to the system nearly 10 years later with the release of the Classic NES Game Boy Advance SP—a special edition of the Game Boy Advance SP handheld that was colored to resemble an NES. In addition, Nintendo released 12 Classic NES GBA game cartridges—including Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, and Metroid—that replicated the NES originals almost pixel for pixel.

MEMORIES OF

Super Mario

BY HIDEO KOJIMA
Creator of the Metal Gear series

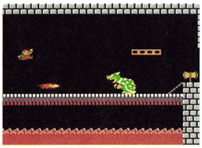


With the creation of Super Mario Bros., Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto not only altered the future of gaming, but actually changed the concept of "value" for all forms of entertainment. And, in the process, changed my future—leading me to become the game designer I am today.

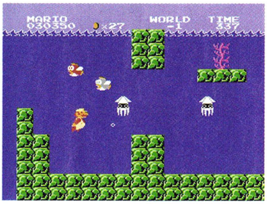
Using just two simple actions—run and jump—this game managed to capture the thrill and adventure of "exploring a world" in virtual form. For this amazing feat, I feel the game truly deserves to be hailed as one of mankind's greatest inventions. The game's design, sense of fun, interactivity, and cerebral philosophy have made it the forefather of every game that has come since, and of every game yet to come.

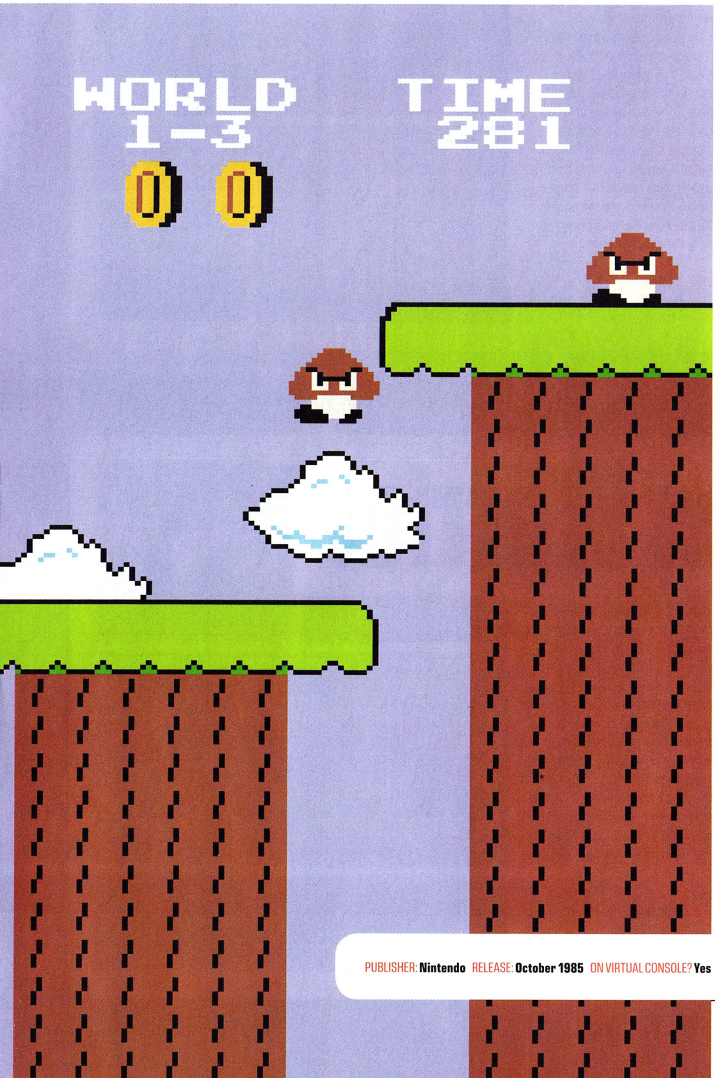
Super Mario Bros. is equivalent to the Big Bang of our gaming universe. If it were not for this blindingly spectacular creation, digital entertainment as we know it today would not exist.

Mr. Miyamoto, thank you for giving birth to Super Mario Bros.



Bros.

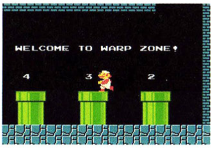




BY YUJI NAKA
Co-creator of Sonic the Hedgehog

I have a lot of fond memories of the NES. I think I bought most of the games that were released for the system. [Laughs] If I had to pick a favorite, though, I'd probably go with Super Mario Bros. And actually, that turned out to be a very important title for me. Back then, games didn't allow you to save your progress. So when you wanted to play Super Mario Bros., you always had to start from World 1-1. You could use the Warp Zones to skip many of the other levels, but you always had to play through World 1-1. Doing so eventually became kind of tedious, so I always tried to get through the level as fast as I could. And that inspired the initial concept for Sonic the Hedgehog.

Actually, the first project I worked on at Sega was a game for the Famicom [the Japanese version of the NES]. But it was right about the time that Sega decided to enter the console wars, so the game was never released. I would love to publish it one day, though. Now that we have things like Virtual Console, maybe it'll finally be able to see the light of day.



PUBLISHER: **Nintendo** RELEASE: **October 1985** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

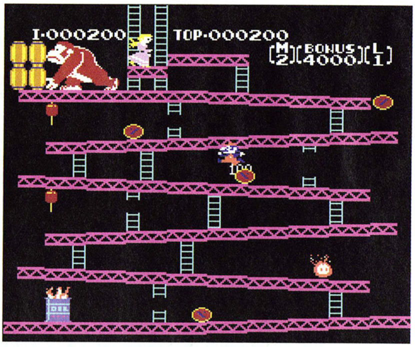
MEMORIES OF

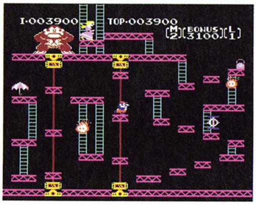
Donkey Kong

BY HIDEKI KONNO
Producer of Nintendogs and Mario Kart Wii

Donkey Kong was a game that motivated me to apply to work at Nintendo. At that time, Donkey Kong was a huge game in arcades, but it cost money every time you wanted to play. I was at the arcade and stacking up all those coins on a pretty regular basis. When the first Famicom [Japanese version of the NES] television commercial aired, it featured Donkey Kong. At the end of the commercial, it said the price of the console was in the range of 10,000 yen. I misread the digits on the screen, though—I added one more zero and thought it said 100,000 yen. And I was seriously considering purchasing the Famicom for 100,000 yen. I thought, "I've spent that much money on Donkey Kong at the arcade, so it would be worth it!" So I went to the store and discovered that the price was only 10,000 yen. I thought it was on sale for 90% off! [Laughs] I think I made that original misperception because the quality of Donkey Kong on Famicom was so close to the arcade version.

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **June 1986**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**





For a lot of video game fans, Donkey Kong is where it all started.

I·006000
TOP·006000
BONUS

MEMORIES OF

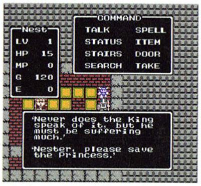
Dragon Warrior

BY YUJI HORII
Creator of Dragon Quest

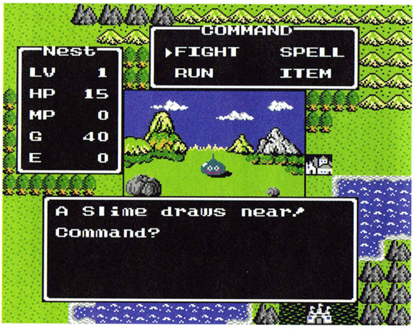
I've always felt that the basic mechanics of RPGs were a lot of fun, and I created Dragon Quest [Dragon Warrior in North America] because I wanted a wider audience to be able to enjoy them. The user interfaces of the RPGs of the era were so complicated that they intimidated new users. So I made the systems and controls as simple as I could, and made the core mechanics part of the game's story. Perhaps that's what everyone responded so strongly to, and why it became the phenomenon that it did. Also, at the time everyone said that NES cartridges didn't have sufficient capacity for RPGs, and the more I heard that, the more adamant I became about making one!

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **August 1989**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

21 years ago, Dragon Warrior defined the console RPG.



'Never does the King speak of it, but he must be suffering much.'
'Nester, please save the Princess.'

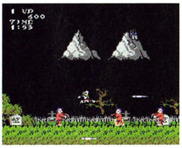


A Slime draws near!
Command?

memories of

Ghosts 'n Goblins

BY BEN JUDD
Producer of Bionic Commando Rearmed

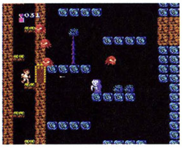


The tale of a bearded javelin-throwing knight, his lovely blue-haired princess, and the massive floating demon that tore them apart. This game has everything: zombies, demons, Big Men (I still don't know what in the heck they were supposed to be), and let's not forget the classic first appearance of crows (which would later be immortalized in the Resident Evil series as one of the most annoying enemies to appear in a Capcom game). This was my very first Capcom NES game. And it was hard. Damn hard. I remember having to pause the game when I went to school since I couldn't beat it in a single day. By the end of the third day, I remember my face being bright red with anger as I screamed a string of profanities I'm surprised I even knew at that age. This game truly defined "Hell on Earth"...and I loved every minute of it.

PUBLISHER: **Capcom**
RELEASE: **November 1986**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

memories of

Kid Icarus



Kid Icarus was a combination of my two favorite NES franchises: it mixed the items, shops, and dungeons of The Legend of Zelda with the jumping and whimsical charm of Super Mario Bros. And after having watched the original 1981 *Clash of the Titans* numerous times on HBO, I was way into the game's Greek-mythology setting.

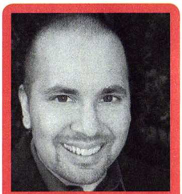
Games generally offered a stiffer challenge back in the NES days than they do now, so it didn't deter me that Kid Icarus was soul-crushingly difficult. Today, I could never put up with the annoying Reaper, who, no matter how sneaky I was, always spotted me and summoned a swarm of Reapettes; or with being turned into an eggplant and having to backtrack through a giant fortress to cure my affliction. But back then, that stuff added to the game's charm.

Although Kid Icarus is one of those classics that holds up better in blurry, nostalgic memories, parts of it are pure genius, and I'll never forget how much the game gripped me 23 years ago. **—CHRIS S.**

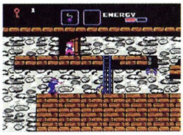
PUBLISHER: **Nintendo** RELEASE: **July 1987** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

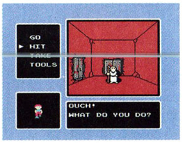
memories of

The Goonies II



BY TYRONE RODRIGUEZ
Producer of Cave Story



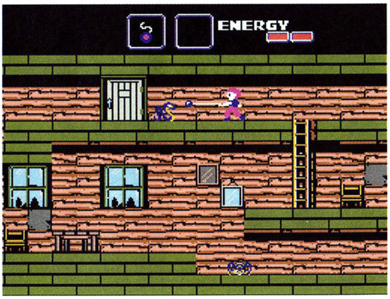


There are a handful of games that remind me of what I consider the best era of the NES. One such title is Goonies II by Konami. It came at a time when I was still infatuated with the idea of being a Goonie, even if it meant being Chunk. I had played the first game at a local arcade quite frequently and was disappointed that the game never was made available for home play (at least not in the US—in Japan it was released on the Famicom). When Goonies II was subsequently released on the NES, I had to have it.

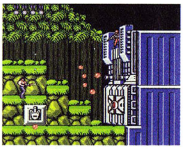
The people at Konami probably assumed a lot of kids were waiting to play the original Goonies. I'm sure of it, because the first area in the sequel screams "homage." Down to the tile set and Cyndi Lauper tune, it was similar to the arcade game. However, unlike the arcade game, which seemed like it was designed to consume quarters, Goonies II felt like a console game from the outset, and something about it reminded me of Zelda. This could be in part due to the story involving the Fratellis kidnapping all the Goonies and a mermaid named Annie.

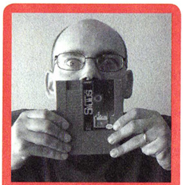
At the time, the combination of semi-free-roaming exploration along with all the items, weapons, and Goonies you had to locate struck me as very unique. And let's not forget the totally random first-person mode featuring an old man who would cry, "Ouch! What do you do?" if you punched him in the face. All this along with very traditional platforming and exploration kept me coming back to beat it over and over again.

PUBLISHER: **Konami** RELEASE: **November 1987** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**



Contra



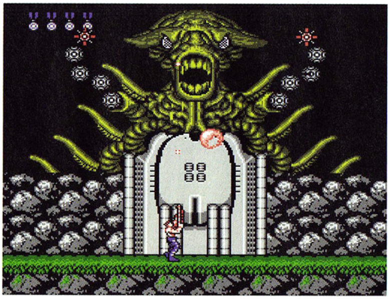


BY MATT BOZON
Director of Contra 4 and creator of Shantae: Risky's Revenge

C'mere, Bill & Lance Jr. It's time to climb up on uncle Mad Dog's lap. Have I ever told you about the time both your daddies blasted their way through Red Falcon's guts and blew up his quivering heart sac? It's been nigh on three decades, but boy howdy, that was video game perfection! You had the birth of two-player simultaneous play, the infamous Konami Code (up, up, down, down, what have you) and best of all, stealing your partner's lives and scrolling him off the screen. They don't make 'em like that anymore! I hear they try hard, though.

It all started on a mechanical tropical island where some bodysnatched soldiers set up a tunnel base full of computers gone mad, somewhere down near Rambo falls. Our boys arrived by chopper, somersaulted up that waterfall and introduced Mr. Scuba and his pet alien to their Rapid Spread Guns. After besting the Snow Field's crimson plow, the discus-throwing Energy Zone bot, some mechanical bird men, and the Red Falcon's egg wall, it was time to bloody-knuckle that vile critter's innards and escape by copter, '80s-style! We're talking a whole game's worth of action packed into the most hardcore 12 minutes of all time, assuming you did it flawlessly with your NES Advantage knob twisted to maximum turbo. Phew! Even after all these years, I still consider those boys heroes.

PUBLISHER: **Konami**
RELEASE: **February 1988**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**



Ironsword: Wizards & Warriors II

SCORE 2564
MONEY 100
LIFE
MAGIC

SCORE 3960
MONEY 100
LIFE
MAGIC

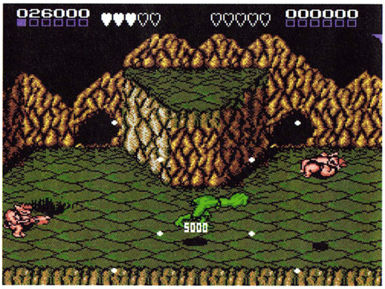
The first Wizards & Warriors was a very good game, but that wasn't why I was so eager for the sequel. No, the reason was the waiting. The game seemed to be in development forever—I remember seeing a feature on video games on news show *20/20* that included footage of Ironsword more than a year before the game came out, and the title was proclaimed Game of the Month by at least one magazine months before its release. When I finally got the game, I was captivated. Of course, the game's quality will be forever overshadowed by Acclaim's choice of Fabio as the cover model, but them's the breaks. —**CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: **Acclaim** RELEASE: **December 1989** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

Battletoads

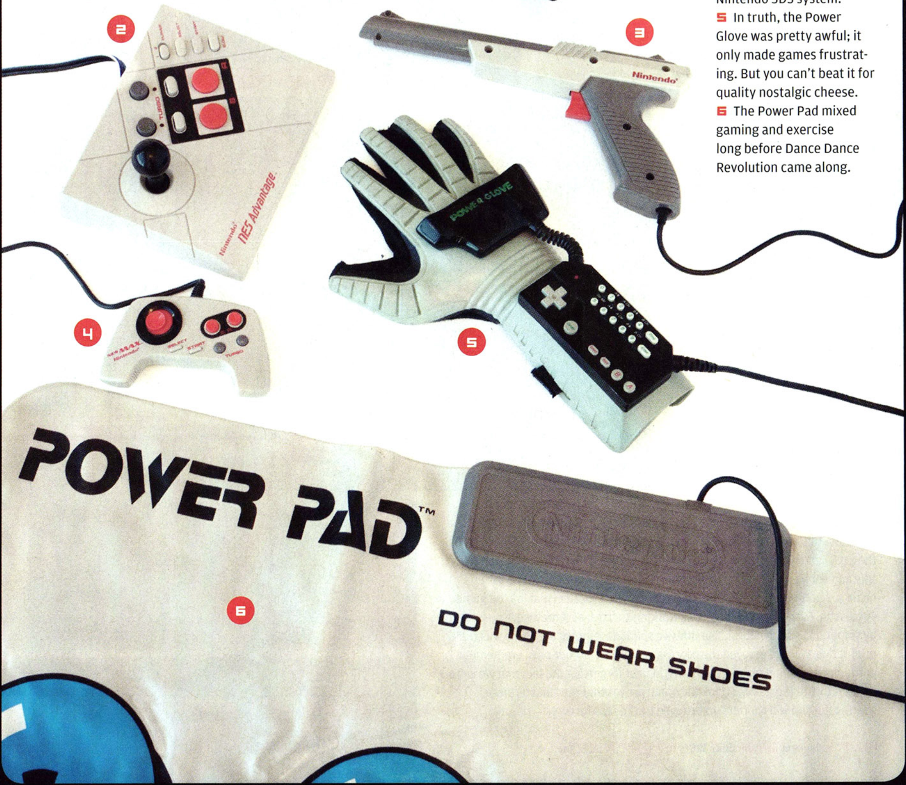
Battletoads, while an awesome cartoonish take on the old beat-'em-up genre, was notorious for being one of the most monstrously difficult games on the NES. Its reputation was well-earned. One of my most fun/frustrating memories of the 8-bit days was when a friend and I rented a copy of Battletoads. We spent the entire day trying to get to the end of that cursed/wonderful game. Thanks to the limited continues, we must have spent two or three hours on the third level alone (darn Turbo Bikes!). We never did manage to reach the Dark Queen, but we came close—and we had a blast doing it. —**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: **Tradewest** RELEASE: **June 1991** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**



Top Gear

From duds like the Roll & Rocker (a controller you stood on) to the U-Force (which attempted motion control before the technology worked), the NES saw its share of questionable controllers. But the six accessories shown here stood above the rest with quality features that helped gamers instead of hindering them (or at least, in the case of the Power Glove, made us look really badass while losing over and over). It's a good bet that most NES players owned at least one of these controllers, which puts them at the top of the peripheral heap as iconic relics of the NES era.



1 Although the sole ability of R.O.B.—to lift and place spinning tops—could only be stretched to two games, he remains an NES icon.

2 The NES Advantage introduced rapid fire—which was a thumb-saver in button-mashers like Pro Wrestling—and a slow-mo button, which quickly paused and unpaused the game repeatedly.

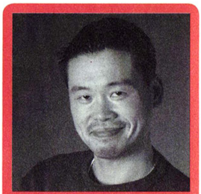
3 Several games worked with the NES Zapper, but to many gamers, it was simply the Duck Hunt controller.

4 The NES Max put rapid fire in the palm of your hand, and introduced the "Cycloid" Control Pad that reminds us a little of the new Slide Pad on the Nintendo 3DS system.

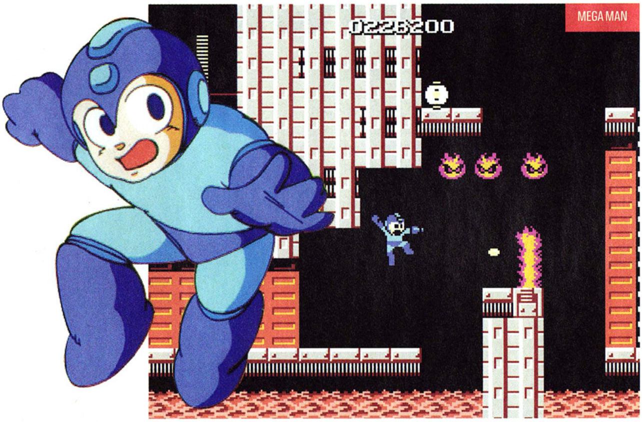
5 In truth, the Power Glove was pretty awful; it only made games frustrating. But you can't beat it for quality nostalgic cheese.

6 The Power Pad mixed gaming and exercise long before Dance Dance Revolution came along.

Mega Man & Mega Man 2

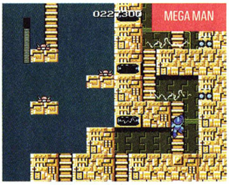


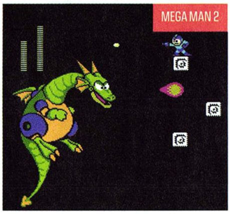
BY KEIJI INAFUNE
Mega Man series producer and original character designer

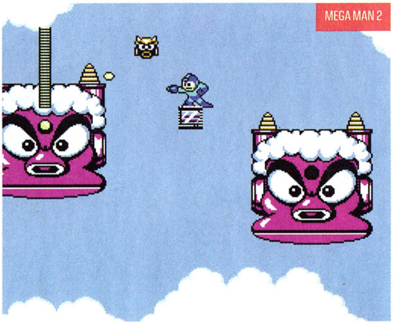


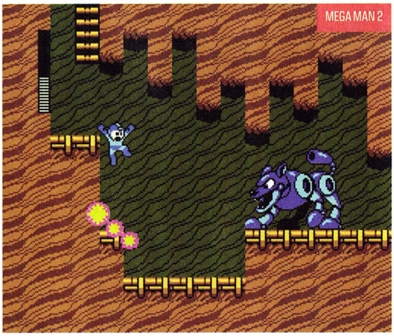
Mega Man was my first major project at Capcom. I remember that I was simply caught up with the project, and really motivated to make the best game. I wanted to utilize the best ideas I had in mind. I played all the builds and enjoyed the process of bug-testing. I remember that I was so busy with the project and I stayed at the office working till late. Even though I couldn't go home for so many days, I was really motivated and felt happy working. I enjoyed not just creating the game but also playing the game. I think if the creators can truly enjoy the game, the game can really entertain users as well. I believe that if the game receives all the love and care from the creators, it will continue to live long, receiving the love from the fans. So, I am really motivated to continue to keep my passion for upcoming projects.

PUBLISHER: **Capcom**
RELEASE: **December 1987**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**









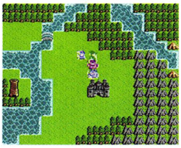
For Mega Man 2, I was so excited and looking forward to implementing elements that we weren't able to utilize in the first Mega Man, partially due to the [NES cartridge] capacity issue. We spent only four months to develop the title and yet Mega Man 2 is the most beloved Mega Man game in the series's history. Strong enthusiasm from the creators was crucial in making the game successful. Every staff member was working so hard, as if they were possessed by something supernatural. The time we spent developing the game was really productive. We also enjoyed the process very much. Sometimes, I remember getting preoccupied playing the game, almost forgetting the fact that we were the creators of the game. I think the game proves that the "masterpiece is everlasting and will continue to be loved by the fans forever."

PUBLISHER: **Capcom** RELEASE: **June 1989** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

memories of

Dragon Warrior III

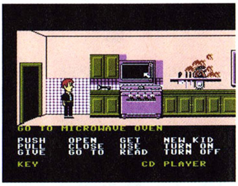
BY ATSUSHI INABA
Producer of MadWorld and Okami

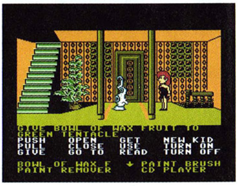


Dragon Quest III was an extremely memorable game for me. I played more games than there are stars in the sky, so trying to pick one is quite difficult, but as a game that affected the course of my life, Dragon Quest III is one that I will never forget. When I was 12, I embraced my dream of becoming a game creator, and it drove me to study various disciplines. However, when you hit adolescence, you begin to entertain other possibilities. I played DQIII when I was 17 years old, when my faith in my childhood dream was wavering. I became totally hooked, as the game drew me out and made me feel again. It reminded me that I had wanted to make games that made people feel the way I did. For reminding me of that, and for putting me back on an unwavering path toward becoming a game creator, it is a game that I remember fondly to this day.

PUBLISHER: **Enix**
RELEASE: **March 1992**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

Maniac Mansion

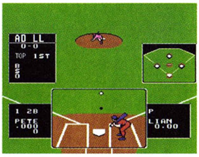

GO TO MICROWAVE OVEN
PUSH PULL GIVE
OPEN CLOSE GO TO
GET USE READ
NEW KID TURN ON TURN OFF
KEY
CD PLAYER


GIVE BOWL OF WAX FRUIT TO GREEN TENTACLE
PUSH PULL GIVE
OPEN CLOSE GO TO
GET USE READ
NEW KID TURN ON TURN OFF
BOWL OF WAX F PAINT REMOVER
PAINT BRUSH CD PLAYER

Having never tried the PC version of Maniac Mansion, I didn't know what to expect when I played the NES adaptation. But I quickly discovered that it was unlike anything else out there—a point-and-click adventure with an awesome sense of humor and multiple solutions to almost every puzzle. Of course, it's hard to mention Maniac Mansion without bringing up the fact that you could microwave a hamster in the game. I admit, the first time I played through the game I tried microwaving the hamster just because I'd heard about the controversy, but I felt so bad I reset the game and restarted from my last save point. **—CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: **Jaleco** RELEASE: **September 1990** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

Baseball Stars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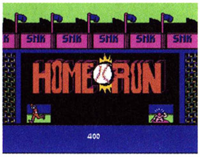
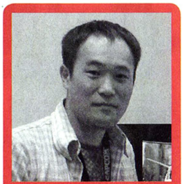

SNK
HOME RUN
400

I played a lot of Baseball Stars with my dad when I was a kid, and though our hardball rivalry was pretty close at first, he definitely had the edge. So I did what any smart (or crazy) general manager would do—I fired all of my mediocre veterans and replaced them with high-upside rookies. That meant my team was pretty awful for a while, but it eventually became an unstoppable juggernaut. The fact that such a thing was possible in a baseball video game left quite an impression on me, and it's probably what sparked my current interest in sabermetrics and the analytical side of baseball. **—STEVE T.**

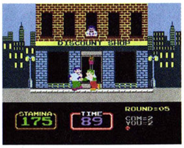
PUBLISHER: **SNK** RELEASE: **July 1989** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

memories of

Urban Champion



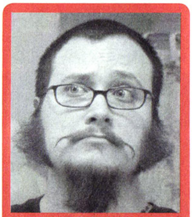
BY MAKOTO YAMAMOTO
Director of Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes


DISCOUNT SHOP
STAMINA
175
TIME
89
ROUND=05
COM=2
YOU=2

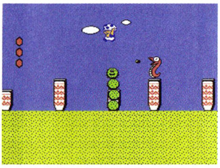
The game that still reverberates the most within me is Urban Champion. I just have to look at it and I go right back to being a kid again. Being able to play with my friends—having a friend over at my house and playing games together—that was the game that I had the most fun playing with them. And then the sense of nervousness or anticipation—are the cops going to come get me? What's going to happen? That game really got me the most when I was a kid.

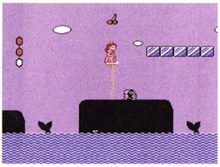
PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **June 1986**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

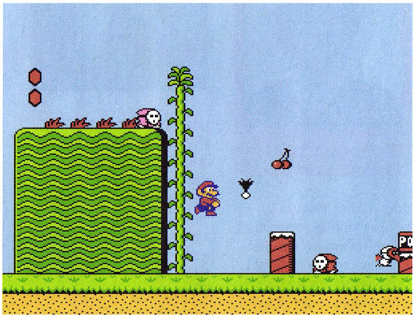
Super Mario Bros. 2



BY EDMUND MCMILLEN
Co-creator of Super Meat Boy







Even though Super Mario Bros. 2 wasn't originally a Mario game, I personally think it was by far one of the most creative and influential games of the series. It not only developed the series's characters, but also introduced a ton of amazingly designed enemies that would be used for years to come.

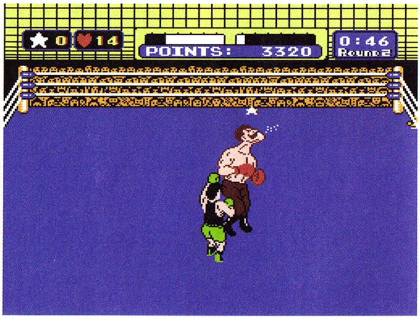
If you think about it, Super Mario Bros. 2 not only established the physical differences between the brothers, but it also empowered the series's damsel in distress, making her out to be a floating powerhouse. The game was also the first Mario title to really paint an immersive and memorable world system, sending you through video game–environment staples like desert, ice, sky, factory, and so on.

Super Mario Bros. 2 had a huge impact on me as a game developer but most importantly as a character designer. It had some of the most amazing enemies in any game I've ever played to date. The mysterious Shy Guys, cute Ninjis, those creepy masks that follow you when you pick up a key—all mind-blowingly awesome. But the king of them all was Birdo, the gender-confused dino that ingests eggs so he can become more like a girl. How is that not brilliant?

Oh, by the way: It was all just a dream.

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **October 1988**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

Punch-Out!!

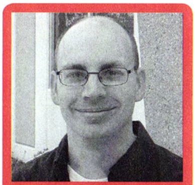


The two games responsible for getting me hooked on this wonderful medium were The Legend of Zelda and Punch-Out!!. Each exemplified a different aspect of what made video games so exciting to me. Zelda offered an incredible sense of discovery that really captured my imagination. (I would even draw new dungeon maps for the game when I got bored in grade school.) With Punch-Out!!, it was something more visceral. Every time I played, I got a little bit better, and foes that originally seemed invincible eventually fell to my pugilistic skills. There was something immensely satisfying about that, and the same basic formula drives almost all of my favorite action titles to this day.

Punch-Out!! paired its finely honed gameplay with one of the all-time great casts of characters. Everyone who stepped into the game's virtual ring can remember the perverse thrill of pummeling Glass Joe, laughing the first time King Hippo lost his trunks, or getting jumpy while Bald Bull prepared to charge. Then there was the game's infamous champ. For a few weeks in fifth grade, Iron Mike was the hottest topic of conversation among my friends. I only ever beat him once, but it felt like the single greatest accomplishment of my 10-year-old life. —**STEVE T.**

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **October 1987**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

Metroid

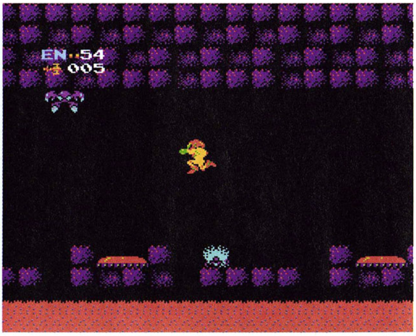


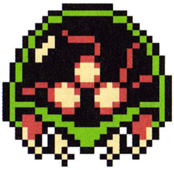
BY MATT BOZON
Director of Contra 4 and creator of Shantae: Risky's Revenge

The Grandmother Brain of exploration games! I remember my first encounter with the creatures from planet Zebes like it was yesterday. After a rousing game of Ghosts 'n Goblins at the local burger place, I begged Mom and Dad to swing by the mall so I could try for a copy of Metroid on launch day. I'd played through Kid Icarus, and was now pretty sure that anything the Nintendo Fun Club told me to buy, I was buying. This was supposed to be the sister game. So, I lucked out, got the last copy, and agonized over the instruction booklet all the way home, eager to help the space police with my football helmet and rocket hands as Samus, the entirely male space hero.

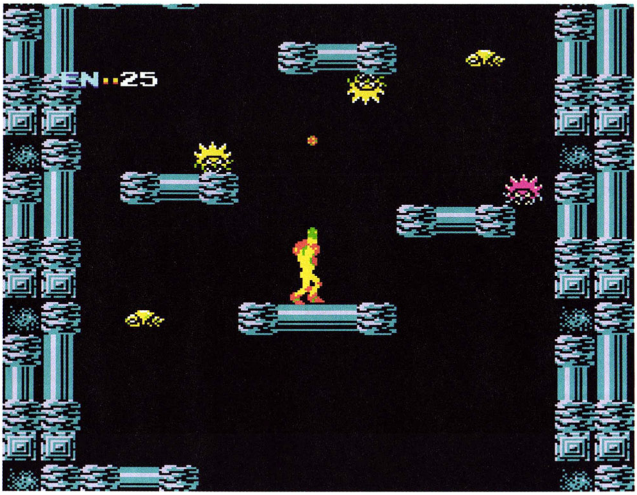
This game was (and is) so epic it's hard to sum up. I remember total disorientation, like the first day at a new school. The levels didn't end or have goals, I could turn into a living pinball at the press of a button, and without the aid of a map the color-swapped halls left me to wander aimlessly. After hours of play, I'd found all kinds of missiles, secret blocks, and Energy Tanks in those long vertical and horizontal stretches. The place started to seem familiar, and after a while I got to know the ins and outs of Zebes like it was home. And I think that's part of the magic of the original Metroid. You upgrade Samus as a character, but the real attachment comes from becoming intimately familiar with this z place. It makes the ending all the more significant, when you finally discover the hideouts of minibosses Ridley and Kraid, blast them away, and open the vaguely hinted-at path to the Metroid.

In Tourian, what follows is, to this day, the most notorious enemy sprite ever conceived (proof: Goomba and Octorok don't get games named after them). The Metroids that occupy the final stages of the NES original are ruthless, overpowered, and numerous, and there's no clue as to how to beat them. The solution probably seems obvious these days, but that's just because the key to defeating the Metroid is on the lips of every gamer who's ever been sucked dry. In the end, after surviving impossible odds, the game throws you into what is by far the most adrenaline-soaked battle I've ever played, even to this day: the showdown with Mother Brain, followed by the nerve-wracking self-destruct escape. You know, in case you have any blood, sweat, or tears left to give. Then, at the most climactic part of the game comes the sucker punch...Samus revealed! A shapely interstellar hottie is you! This, friends, is epic, unmatched, gaming perfection often imitated—Supered and Zero Missioned—but never truly duplicated.





PUBLISHER: Nintendo
RELEASE: August 1987
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? Yes

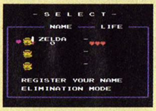


Know the Code

Games could be pretty tough in the era of the NES. Fortunately, nearly every game worth its salt had a secret code or hidden cheat trick that'd help you get further. Cheat codes aren't as ubiquitous these days (now that we can earn unlockables instead), but here are some of the top secrets from those bygone days.

THE KONAMI CODE

Even if you've never used the Konami Code, chances are you've heard it or seen it on a shirt: Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start. It's rhythmic, catchy, easy to remember, and highly useful. The code first appeared in Konami's Gradius, enabling players to fully power up their ships, but it really made its mark in Contra and Life Force. In those titles, the code gave you 30 lives (up from a mere 3), which made the games actually, um, beatable.



- S E L E C T -

NAME LIFE

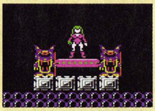
ZELDA 0

REGISTER YOUR NAME

ELIMINATION MODE

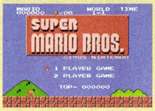
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SECOND QUEST

Gamers who conquered The Legend of Zelda received one of the coolest bonus features ever included in a game—a second quest that featured all-new dungeons and tougher challenges. If you wanted to go straight to the second quest without all the effort, you could enter your name as ZELDA at the player-registration screen.



METROID: JUSTIN BAILEY

By entering JUSTIN BAILEY followed by a row of dashes at Metroid's password screen, you could play the game as an unmasked Samus, in all her glory (and with almost all of her weapons). There are lots of rumors about the code's origin and whether it was intentional or not, but it's an indisputable fact that the code was totally rad.



MARIO 000000 x00 WORLD 1-1 TIME

SUPER MARIO BROS.

©1985 NINTENDO

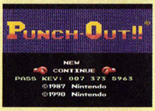
1 PLAYER GAME

2 PLAYER GAME

TOP- 000000

SUPER MARIO BROS.: CONTINUE CODE

The continue code in Super Mario Bros. is one of the simplest codes ever—just hold A and press Start after your game's over—but it was super-useful if you didn't want to start over from World 1-1 every time. Though not codes per se, Super Mario Bros. had a number of other cool secrets, such as the near-infinite-lives trick on World 3-3 and the glitch that enabled you to visit the legendary Minus World.



PUNCH-OUT!!

NEW

CONTINUE

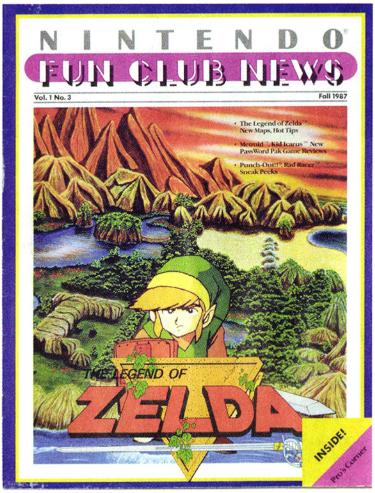
PASS KEY: 007 373 5963

©1987 Nintendo

©1990 Nintendo

PUNCH-OUT!!: FIGHT THE CHAMP

Getting to the champ in Punch-Out!! was no easy task. It took skill, dedication, reflexes, and timing. And if you didn't make the most of your opportunity you'd have to start the World Circuit anew, or at least beat a few more chumps as you reasserted yourself as the top contender. Or you could just enter the password 007 373 5963 and go straight to the final bout. Of course, beating the champ—and avoiding his instant-knockdown punches—was incredibly tough.



NINTENDO®

FUN CLUB NEWS

Vol. 1 No. 3

Fall 1987

- The Legend of Zelda™ New Maps, Hot Tips
- Metroid™, Kid Icarus™ New PassWord Pak Game Reviews
- Punch-Out!!™, Rad Racer™ Sneak Peeks

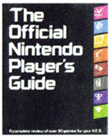
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

INSIDE! Pro's Corner

Pioneering Publications

The NES came onto the scene before gamers had the option of dashing out to the newsstand or hopping onto the Internet to find out what was going on in the gaming world, so the folks at Nintendo took it upon themselves to keep players informed. With guides, newsletters, and magazines, Nintendo brought NES fans together, turned a fledgling hobby into a nationwide community, and showed everyone how to play with power.

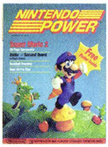
▲ **Nintendo Fun Club News** Nintendo started Nintendo Fun Club News in the winter of 1987, when the NES was only just starting to take the country by storm. The publication—which grew from a 6-page newsletter to a 28-page minimagazine during its 7-issue run—was free to subscribe to and became the first place to find NES news, codes, and info on upcoming games.



The Official Nintendo Player's Guide

A complete review of over 90 games for your N.E.S.

◀ **The Official Nintendo Player's Guide** This 162-page tome from 1987 collected maps and tips for a long list of popular NES games, and even gave players their first look at Zelda II: The Adventure of Link. In an era when strategy guides were extremely rare, this book was a game player's bible.



NINTENDO POWER

Super Mario 2

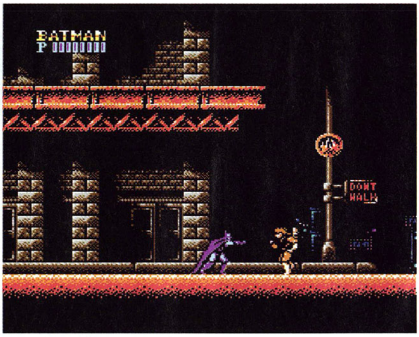
Free

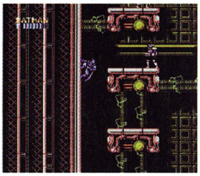
◀ **Nintendo Power** In 1988, Nintendo Fun Club News was replaced with Nintendo Power. The first issue, which was cover-dated July/August 1988, was sent free to the Fun Club faithful and packed in more than 100 pages of NES news, previews, and tips. NP became so successful that it could turn an unknown game into a hit by featuring it in one of the magazine's trademark map-heavy strategy articles. In our humble opinion, it still serves as the number-one source for all things Nintendo.

MEMORIES OF

Batman

BY BRIAN PROVINCIANO
Creator of Retro City Rampage





With the amazing library of titles the NES has, it's hard to pick an all-time favorite. When I really think about it, though, no other titles hold stronger memories for me than Batman. Sure, it was Batman. Sure, as a kid, anything in side-scroller form was instantly awesome. At the end of the day, though, Batman is truly a title that can hold its own, licensed or not. It's still amazingly fun to this day and represents to me what an NES game is and should be.

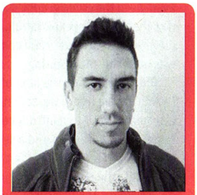
Immediately when I think of Batman, its tight ninja platforming comes to mind, followed in a close second by the incredible music. They went hand in hand, the background beats making even running feel exciting. The tight controls began with the attacks and took the prize with the acrobatics. Even when out of weapons, Batman's fist packed a really satisfying punch. The rapid fire treaded on E. Honda territory and you needed the speed.

Batman had its share of tricky areas, but much like Contra, you could run through it near flawlessly once you got the rhythm down. Whether it was wall-jumping above a pool of acid while dodging electric fields above, or knowing to run just close enough to the mobile land mine to activate it then leaping as it explodes, it was so satisfying. Even when I nailed move after move, I was still on the edge of my seat. Batman gave me my first taste of wall-jumping. As the walls became narrow and nearby danger increased, you'd master it with precision. With a sharp eye and some skill, there were even areas in which you could take shortcuts if you got enough height. I'm going to jump back into it right now, as I never did master the final levels!

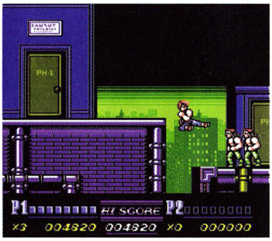
PUBLISHER: **Sunsoft**
RELEASE: **February 1990**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

MEMORIES OF

Double Dragon II: The Revenge



BY JEREMIAH SLACZKA
Creator of Scribblenauts



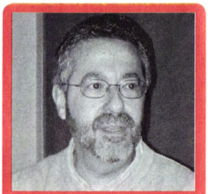
As a child I never owned an NES. I never owned a Super NES either, and I think that's what made me love video games and technology so much. They say absence makes the heart grow fonder. But because I didn't own either of these systems my game choices were limited. I had to play what my friends owned, and most of them were tired of the mainstream classics by the time I got to play their systems—the Marios, Zeldas, or Mega Mans. So I was introduced to the lesser-known but equally awesome tier of titles—games like Contra, Bubble Bobble, and Double Dragon II: The Revenge.

Actually, I played all three Double Dragons on the NES, but the second one was by far the best of the trio for one reason: co-op! That was the first game I got to sit next to my NES-owning buddy and beat up baddies. It's really interesting how co-op has had a resurgence lately as a new innovative feature...when there were games like this back in the '80s that started the trend. Double Dragon brought me into a whole new world of games that included titles like Battletoads, TMNT II, River City Ransom, Final Fight, and a lot more.

PUBLISHER: **Acclaim**
RELEASE: **January 1990**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

memories of

The Legend of Zelda



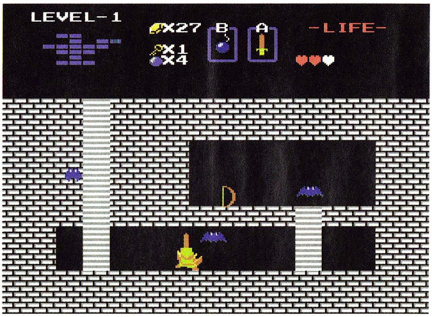
BY WARREN SPECTOR
Creator of Epic Mickey

No man is an island, and no designer creates in a vacuum. Many things filled the vacuum for me in my formative years—movies like *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* and *King Kong*...books like *When Worlds Collide*; *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* (especially *Stand by for Mars*!); and of course the *The Lord of the Rings*...even old radio dramas like *X Minus One* and *Suspense*. (Check out the *Suspense* show called "The House in Cypress Canyon." Listen to it in the dark...I dare you.)

In the world of games, it all started for me with Dungeons & Dragons and a board game called Ogre (the latter, sold in a zip-lock bag to keep costs down to where even I, as a starving student, could afford it, thankfully!). Tabletop gaming led me, inevitably, to video games, where I was inspired by Richard Garriott's Ultima games and, like most everyone in the game business, the entire catalog of Shigeru Miyamoto, starting with the Mario games but especially, for me at least, the Zelda games.

I have to admit, I don't actually remember buying the first Legend of Zelda game—I was buying and playing a lot of games back then, so I can't describe the joy of ripping open the shrink wrap and seeing that gold cartridge. But I remember the feeling of playing the game and thinking I'd found something special.

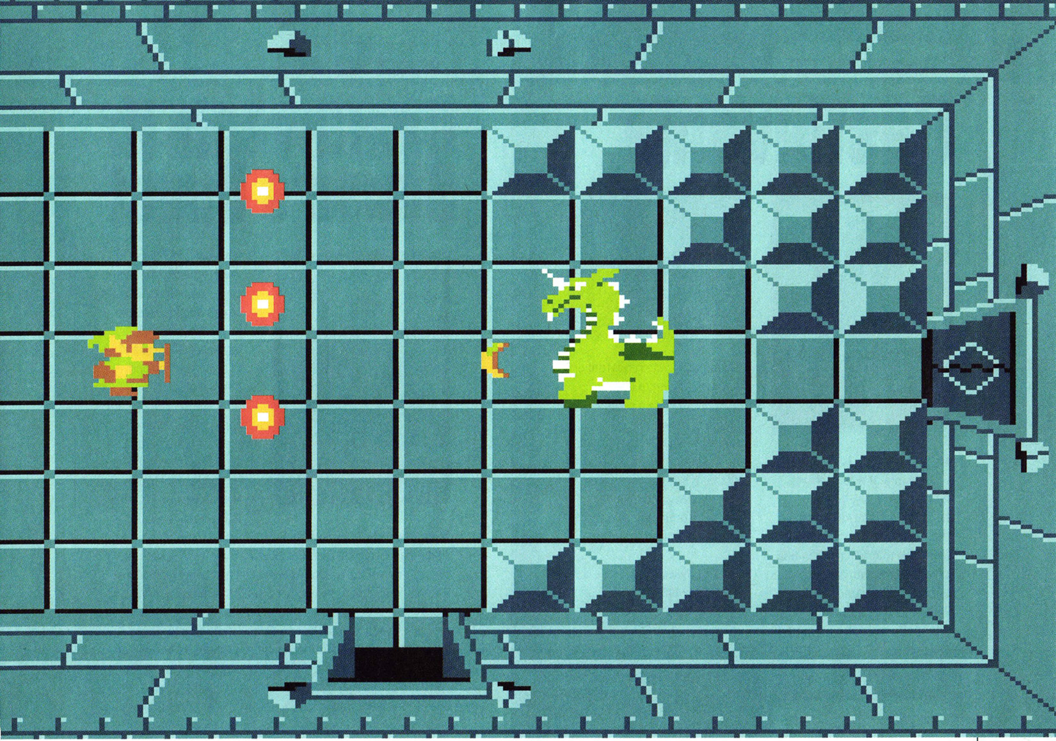
Mr. Miyamoto has said his goal in The Legend of Zelda was to recapture the youthful joy of exploring, of finding "secret" caves and "hidden" lakes and such. That first Zelda game certainly captured that feeling, unlike so many games of the time (and today, actually!) that were all about defeating monsters or solving puzzles. In Zelda, you fought things, of course, and there were plenty of puzzles to solve, but those activities weren't an end in and of themselves—they existed solely in the service of exploration, as tools for uncovering the secrets of a fantastic fictional world.



Even the structure of the game supported the feeling of exploring. The nonlinear structure—explore dungeons in whatever order you want—was a revelation in the video game world. Some PC games (notably those Ultimas I loved so much) gave players freedom to explore the world as they saw fit, but Zelda hammered home for me how powerful the idea of player empowerment was. I mean, the game didn't even force you to explore the cave in which you get the sword—Link's main tool—and you could get through the game without it. (At least I've heard that is theoretically possible—I for sure wasn't good enough to pull that off!) Talk about taking a design risk! Even given the crude graphics of the day, that feeling of exploration, of player-driven discovery and control, was powerful and inspiring.

But as I explored the land of Hyrule for the first time, something else happened: I was introduced to a cast of characters and a set of tools that were utterly compelling—Link, the boy who grows into a hero; Zelda, the princess who, yes, needs rescuing, but whose inherent strength ensures there's a world for Link to save; Ganon, the monster who covets the Triforce; I mean, I still enjoy interacting with these characters 20-plus years later. And the tools? That first game

X0
X0
X0
B
A
-LIFE-

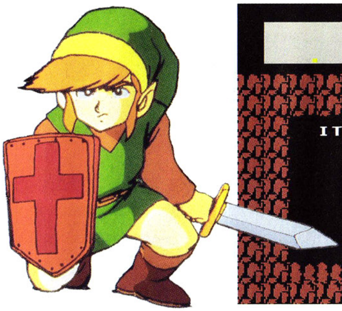


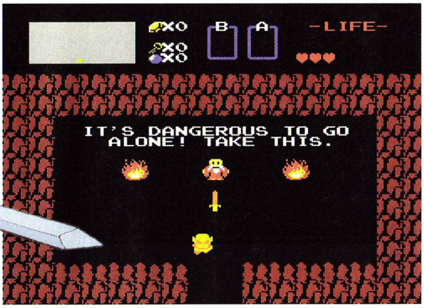
introduced the sword (the optional sword!) and the shield that are still the heart of Zelda gameplay. Even the boomerang was there. (And has there ever been a cooler tool in any game, ever, than Link's boomerang? I don't think so!)

Best of all? The music. I can't even tell you how much I love the Zelda music. The main theme, the "you've discovered a secret" ditty...I swear my blood pressure drops when I hear that stuff. And it was all there in the very first game, on the NES, in glorious lo-fi. I mean, come on, are you serious? Who creates memorable music on an 8-bit console?

To have gotten so much right the first time—world, characters, music, tools, nonlinear game structure... it's just incredible. As a player, I was thrilled. As a creator of games, the ambition and quality of that first Zelda game was inspirational, and even some specific ideas have been a part of my work ever since.

But I have to end with a true confession moment: I've tried replaying that first Zelda game a couple of times recently and, man, it's really, really hard! Frankly, I'm amazed I got through it all those years ago. I don't know if I've lost a step over the last couple of decades or if we've all just become used to easier games, but something's changed—and, honestly, for the better, I think. I'm thankful that first Zelda game came along, to inspire me and many other developers, but I'm just as thankful that we've grown so much as a medium since then! The Zelda games that followed the first one have just gotten better and better—I'll go to my grave believing The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past is the best story game of all time—but everything has to start somewhere. No acorn, no oak tree.... Thankfully, Mr. Miyamoto never forgot his childhood adventures in the woods and brought the spirit of those adventures to all of us in a glorious game—the first Legend of Zelda.



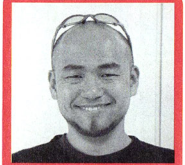


IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS.

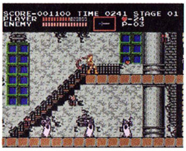
PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **August 1987**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

memories of

Castlevania



BY HIDEKI KAMIYA
Director of Viewtiful Joe and Devil May Cry

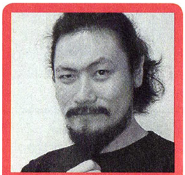


My best memory is easily Castlevania. It was an 8-bit game, a kid's toy, but [it] had a hard, adult-oriented theme. It was an original game [concept] that had you fending off monsters with a whip. The impact of this game still sticks with me. I was seduced by it. I played the game repeatedly, finally managing to clear it without making a single mistake. Castlevania certainly taught me what it meant to get into a game. I can definitely say that it is *the* masterpiece in NES history and I'll never forget the feeling of awe that the game inspired.

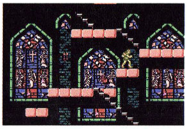
PUBLISHER: **Konami**
RELEASE: **May 1987**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

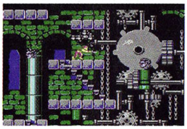
memories of

Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse



BY KOJI IGARASHI
Producer of Castlevania games for the Nintendo DS



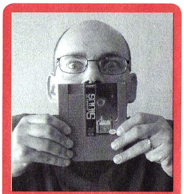


I love Castlevania III—it's my favorite! The graphics, music, and universe all looked amazing on the NES. I still remember those things, just as many fans of the series still remember them. Of course, I love the gameplay, but in addition to that the characters really inspire the imagination. They had simple dialogue, but you can think up a lot of things about them. Alucard seemed like a pretty weak character when Castlevania III first came out, so he didn't make a big impact on me back then. But later, when I looked back at the whole series, he was the one I thought about.

PUBLISHER: **Konami**
RELEASE: **September 1990**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

memories of

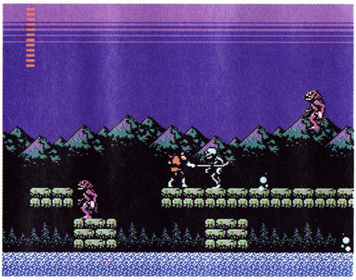
Castlevania II: Simon's Quest



BY MATT BOZON
Director of Contra 4 and creator of Shantae: Risky's Revenge

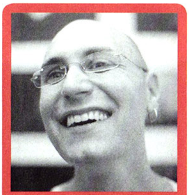
I'm a big fan of Simon's Quest—the day-and-night cycle, looping world, the creepy countryside and its dastardly mansions, each concealing one of Dracula's cursed body parts. It has a lot to offer—perfect old-school controls and some of the best tunes of the series—yet this game furrows a lot of brows. Maybe because it's not as immediately rewarding as Castlevania or Castlevania III, or because the puzzles are so riddle-based and obscure, but 25 years later it still stands out to me as one of the best on NES. Zelda II and Super Mario bros. 2 hold a similar place in history (also 1988 sequels), but only Simon's Quest reshaped its series in a lasting way. It was the first Castlevania to lose the immediacy of the quarter-jerker format, doing away with checkpoints and stage clears. Instead, the payoffs were very spread out. The only time you really knew you were on the right path was when you found a mansion with one of Drac's body parts inside, or solved one of its landmark puzzles—the most famous ones involving kneeling near a cliff or a lake with a crystal in hand. Until then, it was all about free-roaming monster-slaying exploration, chatting up NPCs for clues or items, and upgrading weapons, which later became standard for Castlevania games on GBA and Nintendo DS. Without Nintendo Power back in the day, I really don't know how I could have possibly made it through the game. Maybe it was designed with a growing reader base in mind. Now, a word to the young and uninitiated: if you think you've got what it takes to reassemble Count Dracula piece by piece and put an end to Simon's horrible night of curses, be prepared. It's not a hard game per se, but you'll need plenty of patience if you hope to one day *process* (best typo ever) Dracula's Eyeball.

PUBLISHER: **Konami** RELEASE: **December 1988** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**



MEMORIES OF

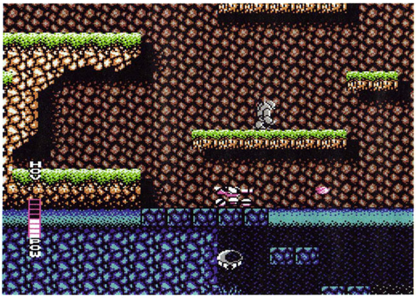
Blaster Master



BY ALEX NEUSE
Creator of the Bit.Trip series

I was 14 when I acquired my NES—late for my circle of friends. Previously, I had to sneak over to my friends' houses to play video games. Finally, I managed to convince my folks that getting an NES was not only the right answer, but the *only* right answer for my big one-four. But then my mom bought me Blaster Master. One look at the cover art, and I was convinced that my mom had no brains. I took it over to the TV, bummed that it wasn't something I'd heard of.

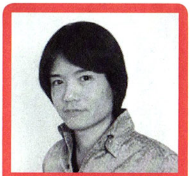
And then my life changed. Blaster Master was the game that convinced me that video game music could be high-quality, memorable, and evocative. And the gameplay! At that time, I didn't understand that Blaster Master was basically a Metroid clone, but honestly, I was driving a tank. And jumping! In a tank! And then I could get out of the tank! And throw grenades! We all know about these things with Blaster Master now, but to a dude who had only played games wherein you couldn't run to the left, this was *life-changing*. And even though the story was corny, it was presented in such a way that it felt meaningful. It was at that point that my love affair with video games began.



PUBLISHER: **Sunsoft**
RELEASE: **November 1988**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

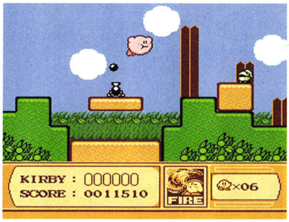
MEMORIES OF

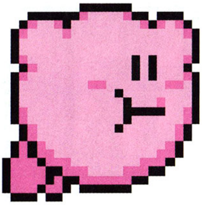
Kirby's Adventure



BY MASAHIRO SAKURAI
Creator of Kirby and Super Smash Bros.

I was quite young when I made Kirby's Adventure—21 years old, I believe. It was made just before we moved on from the NES to the next console, so I was really glad to be able to create a game for the system. We introduced Kirby's copy ability in that game, along with a lot of other abilities that he would then be enabled to perform. This feature was something that I hoped would allow beginners to enjoy the game, while also providing a satisfying experience for advanced players. At the time I never imagined that Kirby would grow into such a franchise, so as I look back at all of the games and sequels that have followed, I'm very happy to have been involved with the creation of Kirby. When the Nintendo 3DS system was announced at E3, I had the opportunity to check out a demo of some old NES games that were rebuilt to run in 3D. Quite by chance I came across Kirby's Adventure among those games, and I was quite touched to see the work that I helped create realized in this new way.

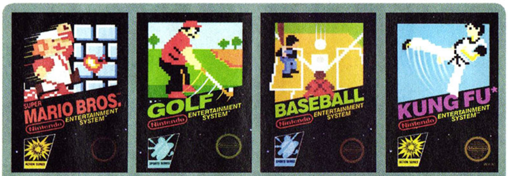




PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **May 1993**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

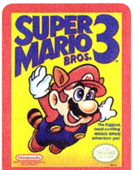
The Art of the Game

Back in the days of the NES (especially before Nintendo Power) it was often hard to find information on a game. Sometimes all you could do was go to the store, look at the game boxes behind the counter, and admire the sweet, sweet artwork that would (allegedly) tell you everything you needed to know about the awesome game contained within. Some NES box art was really cool, some of it was atrocious, and a lot of it was very, very memorable. Here are a few of our favorites.


SUPER MARIO BROS.
GOLF
BASEBALL
KUNG FU

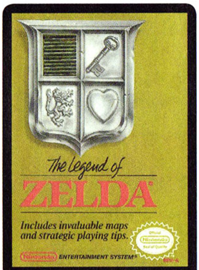
NINTENDO'S EARLY LINEUP

The early box art of Nintendo-published games all had a distinct look—a black frame surrounding pixel art of the game characters. The stark style gave you a good indication of what you were actually getting, although the pixel art was always slightly more detailed than the in-game visuals and was often enhanced with motion-blur effects.


SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

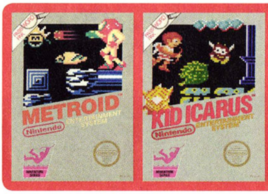
SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

Straightforward and bold, Super Mario Bros. 3 boasted one of the most iconic boxes of any NES game.


The Legend of ZELDA
Includes invaluable maps and strategic playing tips.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

With its gold box—complete with a die cut that let you see the gold cartridge inside—you knew The Legend of Zelda was special, even without any flashy characters or action-packed scenes on display. Subtle yet effective.

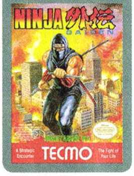

METROID
KID ICARUS

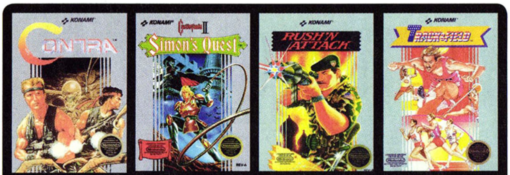
NINTENDO'S ADVENTURE SERIES

Nintendo changed things up a bit with Metroid and Kid Icarus by replacing the black frame with a silver one and adding a tag to advertise the password-save feature. The change was relatively minor, but it was equivalent to slapping a sign on it that said, "This is new and different and it will rock your pants off!"

NINJA GAIDEN

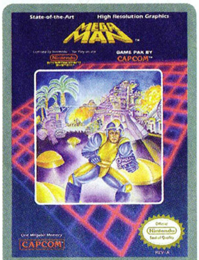
Not only did this game feature a badass ninja on the box, but it featured a badass ninja in front of a city engulfed in flames! You were so awed by the image that you probably didn't even question why the lower-left corner of the box reads, "A Strategic Encounter."


NINJA GAIDEN
A Strategic Encounter
TECMO


KONAMI
CONTRA
Simon's Quest
RUSH'N ATTACK
TRACK & FIELD

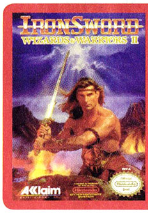
KONAMI GAMES

Konami established a unique style and ran with it. For several years, all games with the Konami label featured a silver frame that surrounded and partially overlapped the artwork. Given Konami's reputation as one the best third-party publishers on the NES, seeing that silver virtually guaranteed good things were inside.


State-of-the-Art High Resolution Graphics
MEGA MAN
CAPCOM

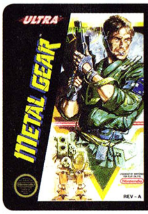
MEGA MAN

The original Mega Man might just have the most maligned box art in history; with its blue-and-yellow-clad pistol-carrying geriatric Mega Man that looked almost nothing like the in-game character, it's easy to see why. Nonetheless, the art has become unforgettably classic, and Capcom has emulated its unintentionally humorous style to promote its recent Mega Man games.


IRONSWORD
WIZARDS & WARRIORS II
Acclaim

IRONSWORD: WIZARDS & WARRIORS II

Of course, no discussion of box art would be complete without mentioning Fabio, the world-famous male model who posed as Kuros the knight for the box of Ironsword. Who cares that Kuros actually spends the whole game wearing a full suit of armor, when you've got a hunk like Fabio on the box?


ULTRA
METAL GEAR

METAL GEAR

The box art for Metal Gear looked pretty cool. The funny part is how similar the drawing was to a scene from *The Terminator*. The image of Solid Snake matched Kyle Reese almost perfectly, right down to the hairdo and the microphone.

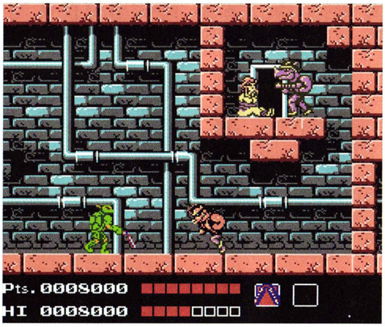
MEMORIES OF

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

BY BRIAN PROVINCIANO
Creator of Retro City Rampage

TMNT on the NES was awesome. I seem to be the only one I know who wasn't glued to TMNT II: The Arcade Game, but the first TMNT had everything! Side-scrollers were king and it didn't disappoint, yet it boasted top-down action and driving, too. GTA hadn't come along yet, so spending all day running over the little Foot Clan sprites never even crossed my mind, but I could've if I wanted to!

The most infamous part of the game was the water level, something which needs no introduction. I'll be honest: water levels in general stress me out, even in Mario games. My first experience of the alternate gravity's added difficulty somehow planted something inside me, because even as I've become skilled at them, the tension they bring has never gone away. TMNT's water level... it's gone down in history for bringing frustration to the masses. It was frustrating, it was stressful, it was incredibly tedious. Even when you successfully completed it, you were ready to faint. Blast! Electric seaweed! The coral's going to eat me! Gah!



I couldn't tell this tale without mentioning the playable characters. While a strategic player would wisely balance the use of each, most of us kids made our decision on one of two factors: our favorite turtle or Donatello. Yup, nothing topped Donatello's long-reaching bo staff. You could use it to cheaply take out enemies and even some bosses. Sure, Raphael had speed, but his limited range made us loathe using him. Leonardo was my favorite, not just from the game, but in everything. I can't say if it was simply the blue (my favorite color), the sword, or his personality, but he was a good choice in the game. Hmm...yeah, it was probably the blue!

PUBLISHER: **Ultra Games** RELEASE: **June 1989** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Arcade Game

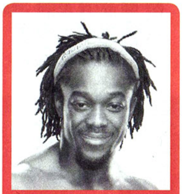
RAPH
94 PTS.
LIFE
REST 0
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

In 1989 the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles owned the arcade scene. Boasting frantic multiplayer action and fantastic graphics and sound, the game kept me pouring in quarters as often as my allowance let me. I wasn't even a fan of the TMNT property, but that didn't matter—the game rocked. After about a year (during which I wrote many letters to Konami begging for a home version), the game came to the NES as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II. Admittedly, the NES iteration wasn't as good as the coin-op version (it supported only two players instead of four, the action wasn't as tight, and it didn't look nearly as good), but getting to play through the entirety of the arcade game at home was pretty awesome—and there were new levels, to boot! Though the game wasn't perfect, it was one of the most impressive and faithful arcade adaptations on the NES. —**CHRIS H.**

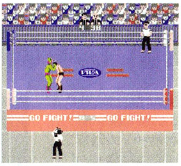
PUBLISHER: **Ultra Games** RELEASE: **December 1990** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

MEMORIES OF

Pro Wrestling



BY KOFI KINGSTON
WWE Pro Wrestler



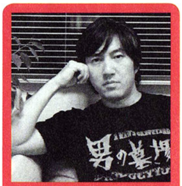
RANKED # 4
A WINNER IS YOU
TIME 3:43
TOTAL 01
WIN 01
LOSE 00

Pro Wrestling for the Nintendo Entertainment System is one of the greater games, man! You had the guy who looked like the Creature from the Black Lagoon—the Amazon—and Starman. [I usually played as] Starman. There was something about the star on the face that was really appealing. It was one of the first wrestling games to come out that was actually, you know, fun! It all started with that.

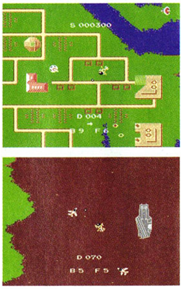
PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **March 1987**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

MEMORIES OF

Raid on Bungeling Bay



BY GOICHI SUDA (SUDA51)
Director of No More Heroes

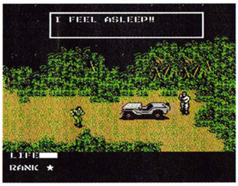


Some of the underlying systems in this game made a really big impression on me. For example, the way that the bases you attacked grew and evolved over the game was a first for the time. Of course, I didn't know who Will Wright was when I played this as a high-school student, but when I look back now I can see the influence it had on his future games.

The other thing that really sticks out in my mind about this game is that it felt like it was taking me far away from Japan to a foreign land. It's hard to articulate, but the game didn't feel "Japanese." I guess even at that time some of the stylistic differences between Japanese and Western game developers were apparent to me, perhaps subconsciously.

PUBLISHER: **Broderbund**
RELEASE: **September 1987**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

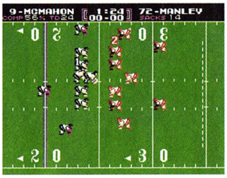
Metal Gear


I FEEL ASLEEP!!

Metal Gear had the coolest magazine ad ever: a plain white page packed with images of all the gear you could collect in the game. At the time, it was rare for games to include an inventory beyond one or two power-ups, but here was a title that gave you a rocket launcher, a gas mask, remote-control missiles, a mine detector, infrared goggles, and loads more. That ad perfectly captured what made Metal Gear such a groundbreaking NES adventure. Paired with a riveting (for its day) story full of twists and turns—and some of the system's funniest Japanese-to-English translations ("The truck have started to move!")—the gear made Metal Gear an 8-bit masterpiece. —**CHRIS S.**

PUBLISHER: **Ultra Games** RELEASE: **June 1988** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

Tecmo Bowl



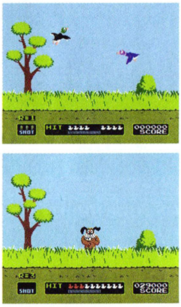
It's the imperfections that make Tecmo Bowl a perfect old-school playing experience. Far from a realistic football simulation, the game gives you just four offensive plays for each of the dozen teams. And some of those plays are so effective that they quickly get banned if you're playing with competitive friends. In fact, it's the game outside of the game—giving friends a hard time for leaning on one killer play or player to reach the end zone—that make my fondest Tecmo Bowl memories surface. The Virtual Console version is stripped of the superstar player names from the '80s, unfortunately, which takes away a lot of the fun. —**GEORGE S.**

PUBLISHER: **Tecmo** RELEASE: **February 1989** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

MEMORIES OF

Duck Hunt

BY ANDREW LUM
Producer of Frobot



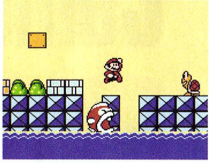
The year was 1986 and I was five years old. I considered myself quite the expert at Duck Hunt, but when I went over to my friend Larry's house the ducks kept dodging my shots. It was almost as if they knew when I was going to shoot! After a few rounds Larry revealed why the ducks were so "smart." With an NES [controller] plugged into the second-player slot, Larry could control the direction of the ducks with the Control Pad! Well, after I learned this Duck Hunt secret I made sure to play the same prank on other unsuspecting young gamers and a few parents, too!

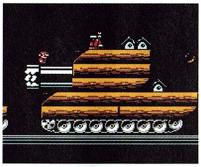
PUBLISHER: **Nintendo** RELEASE: **October 1985** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

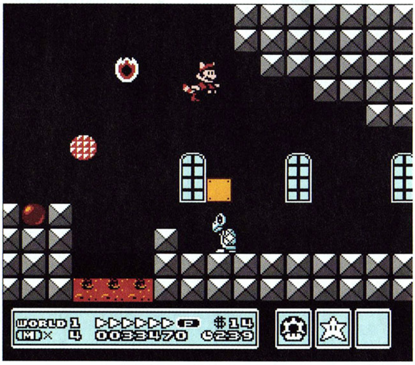
Super Mario Bros. 3

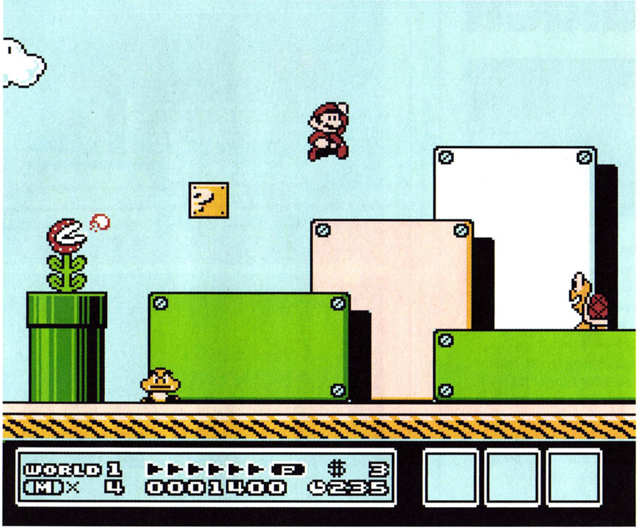
BY HIDEKI KAMIYA
Director of Viewtiful Joe and Devil May Cry

Super Mario Bros. 3 was the game I waited in line for at the department store. I waited at the door on the first floor and ran in as soon as they opened, slicing my way through a wave of elementary-school kids (I was in high school at the time) and was the first one to buy it. That same day I played it at my friend's house. I remember that I played by myself until it was dark outside, leaving my friend alone because he was not interested in the game.





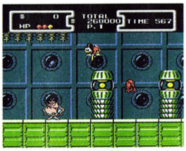


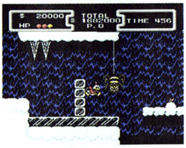


EDITOR'S TAKE: The most unifying moment of the NES years had to have been the release of Super Mario Bros. 3. By the time the highly anticipated sequel showed up in 1990, five years after the release of the NES, the system was at the peak of its popularity. A new Mario game would have been a big deal in any case, but Super Mario Bros. 3 saturated the airwaves with a Saturday-morning cartoon and a classic TV ad in which everyone in the world gathered to chant "Mario!" There were even Super Mario Bros. 3 toys in McDonald's Happy Meals, and who could forget the game's unveiling at the climax of *The Wizard*, which still stands as both the most gratuitous and the most awesome product placement ever? It was a seemingly impossible amount of hype to live up to, but Super Mario Bros. 3 pulled it off. It became the best-selling stand-alone video game of all time, and remains one of the most beloved classics in Nintendo's collection. —**CHRIS S.**

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **February 1990**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

DuckTales

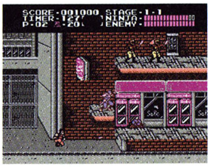




As a huge fan of the *DuckTales* television show, I couldn't wait to play the game of the same name when I saw it at Toys"R"Us. (I wasn't plugged into the gaming scene at the time, so I had to rely on what I saw in stores to know what was out.) I didn't buy the title then, unfortunately (I didn't have enough cash), but I did rent it from a local video store. Funnily enough, I didn't actually like the game all that much when I first played it. I couldn't wrap my head around the swinging-the-cane-like-a-golf-club and using-the-cane-as-a-pogo-stick mechanics; the gameplay felt too different from the other NES platformers I had tried before. I'm really glad I kept at it, though, because DuckTales became one of my all-time favorite games. —**JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: **Capcom**
RELEASE: **September 1989**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**

Ninja Gaiden



Two things sold me on Ninja Gaiden: a giant map-heavy article in Nintendo Power and the game's badass box, which featured a giant ninja standing before a city that was *on fire*. My mind was so blown that I bought the game with a big bag of change I had saved from my school lunch money. Ninja Gaiden was worth my malnourishment, despite its frustratingly reappearing bad guys, and birds that seemed to fly at you from out of nowhere whenever you tried to jump a pit. (Ninja Gaiden may have taught me to curse.) Clinging to walls and throwing shuriken like a real ninja was awesome, and the game was the first I had played that featured cinematic cutscenes. The story opened with two ninjas jumping at each other and clashing swords in front of the moon—what's cooler than that? I eventually learned that Gaiden is pronounced "guy-den" and not "gay-den," as my friends and I had always called it. But no matter how you say it, Ninja Gaiden was about as cool as an 8-bit game could be, especially for ninja-crazed kids of the '80s who, like me, had worn out their VHS copies of *Enter the Ninja*. —**CHRIS S.**

PUBLISHER: **Tecmo** RELEASE: **March 1989** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

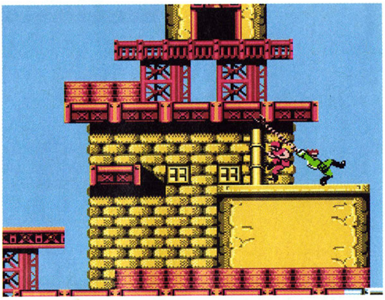
memories of

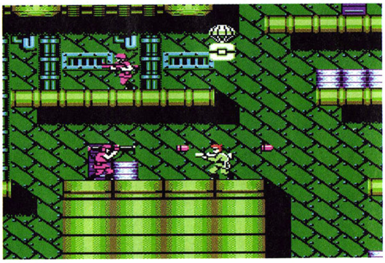
Bionic Commando

BY BEN JUDD
Producer of Bionic Commando Rearmed

Harken back to a world where designers had only two thumb-sized buttons (A and B) to work with, and you'd think fewer action games would have been limited to just an "action" and "jump." But alas, as a child, over half the games I played were based on that design. So it was particularly refreshing to see a game with a truly unique control scheme. Couple that with the fact that I had always longed for a solid "Spider-Man-type" game and the Atari 2600 version wasn't cutting it. Bionic Commando had everything: RPG elements, precise controls, evil head-asploding dictators (yeah, I said "asplode"), and a lead character who was literally named Rad. He was the hero that you didn't just see in games and he was a hero that really reasserted my love for video games.

PUBLISHER: **Capcom** RELEASE: **December 1988** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **No**





Final Fantasy

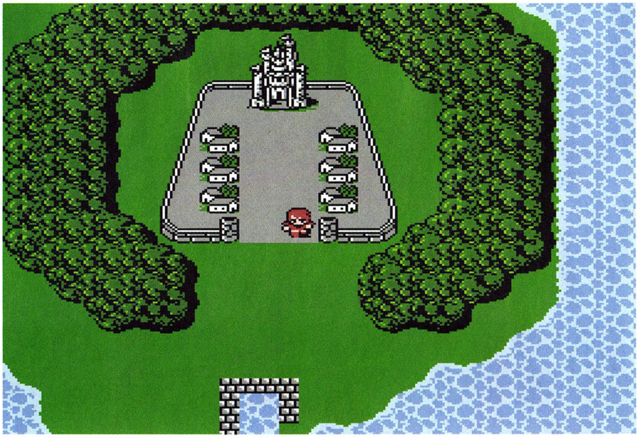
BY AKITOSHI KAWAZU
Co-designer and scenario writer for Final Fantasy

I think [Final Fantasy] was a success because we reflected what we felt was missing from existing RPGs to craft a game that we would genuinely enjoy playing. Some of those things included displaying the [player's character] on screen, giving players the freedom to arrange their parties, and creating detailed correlations between a monster's stats versus magic and weapons. Also, the rather cinematic opening that starts once you cross the bridge was probably something that players had never seen before.

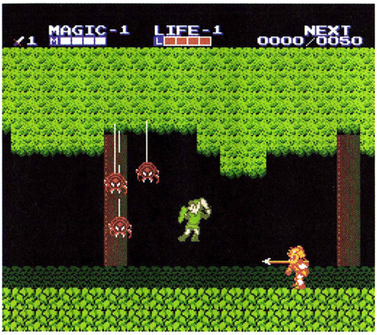
The experience that [Hironobu] Sakaguchi-san, [Hiromichi] Tanaka-san, [Koichi] Ishii-san, and I gained from the first Final Fantasy title was something that we all carried with us to bring to life on all of our following projects. It was also a very important project in the sense that it carried the weight of the company's survival.

We only spent about six months on the development of Final Fantasy, and we were only very heavily involved in development for four months, but it felt like such a long time. It's so strange, since three months go by so quickly in development these days. On top of development itself, we also spent a lot of time on trial and error. It's really amazing to think that we actually put a game together within that time frame.

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo**
RELEASE: **May 1990**
ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**



Zelda II: The Adventure of Link

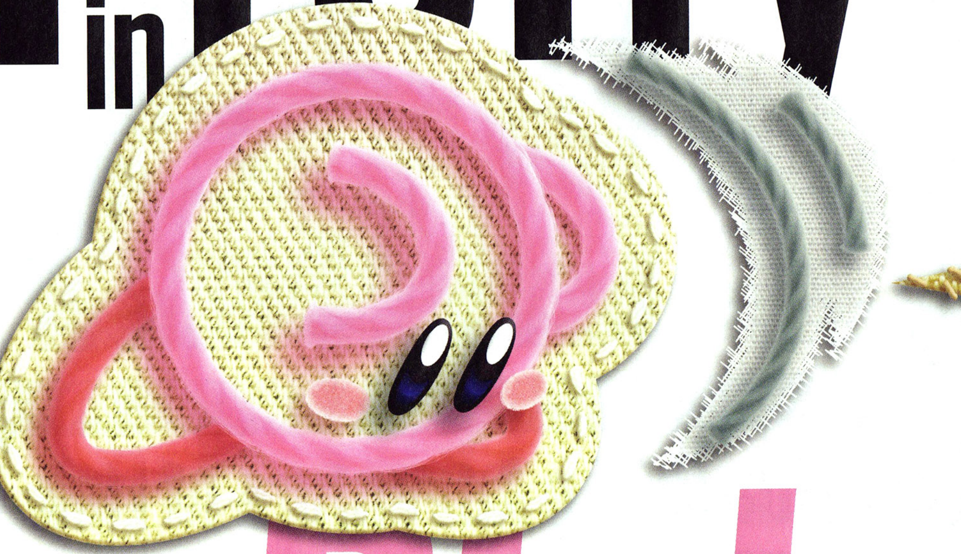


Zelda II has a reputation as the black sheep of the Zelda series—due to its side-view perspective, lack of item use, and its emphasis on platforming and action over exploration—but it contains a lot of rewarding innovations, such as earning experience points to level up, conversing with townsfolk, and using magic for the first time in the series. The swordplay was tough to master but shockingly deep, and you've gotta love the downward thrust—one of the coolest fighting moves in any NES game.

Since I wasn't particularly fond of overhead-perspective titles in my early days as a gamer, when Zelda II came out featuring side-scrolling action mixed with the adventure elements that made the first Zelda so great, I felt as if Nintendo had made the game just for me. Back then I didn't realize how insanely difficult the game was; I thought that the rock-hard challenge was pretty much the standard for video games, and the experience definitely helped make me into a better player. My first time through, however, I think I saw the Game Over screen on more than 250 occasions—with the resurrected Ganon mocking me every single time. **—CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: **Nintendo** RELEASE: **December 1988** ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE? **Yes**

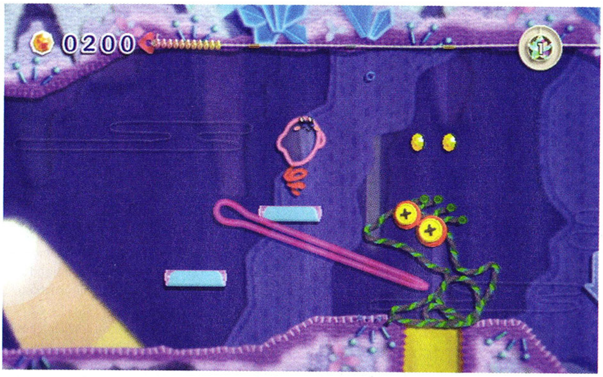
Pretty in Pink



The developers behind Wario Land: Shake It! weave a new graphically stunning 2D adventure for Wii—Kirby's Epic Yarn.

BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **GOOD-FEEL** RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2010** Wii



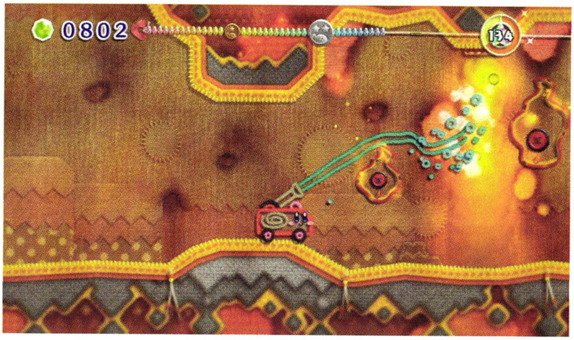
If you think you know Kirby, think again. The little pink puffball has undergone a significant metamorphosis in his first Wii console outing, Kirby's Epic Yarn: not only does he look like, well, yarn (due to being transported by the evil sorcerer Yin-Yarn to a world in which everything is made of textiles), but he also has an arsenal of new powers. See, the air flows right through the yarnified Kirby when he tries to inhale enemies to steal their powers; fortunately, he can whip his adversaries with a long piece of yarn or transform into an array of handy objects, including an automobile, a parachute, a submarine, and a weight.

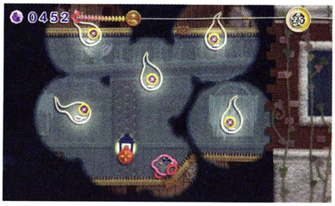
Kirby will need all the tools he can get, too, as he travels alongside his buddy, Prince Fluff, and searches for magic pieces of yarn that can stitch the world back together again. (Yin-Yarn broke the globe into seven pieces; he is the villain, after all.) Each piece is divided into baddie- and puzzle-filled levels that require the use of some or all of Kirby's abilities. For example, you can transform into a car (by holding the Wii Remote controller NES-style and double-tapping left or right on the Control Pad) to jump onto higher platforms than Kirby can reach normally; then you can morph into a parachute (by holding 2) to slow your descent from that platform in order to pick up floating collectible beads; and finally, you can slam to the ground as a weight (hold down on the Control Pad), crushing foes or breakable objects beneath you. If you fall into a body of water in the process (or at any time, really), Kirby will become a submarine automatically.

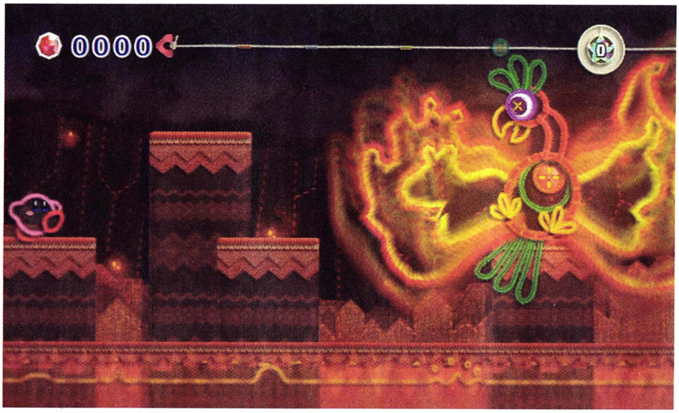
FIRED UP

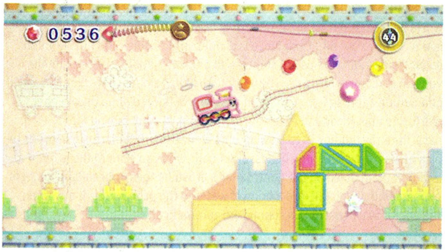
There's a good amount of water to navigate in the first world, Grass Land, but there's a noticeable lack of it in the second world, Hot Land. Here Kirby must make his way through levels teeming with sand, lava, and dinosaurs. The basic gameplay remains the same as it is in Grass Land (some combat and a lot of platforming), but these new locales allow for new super transformations. These are location-specific vehicles that Kirby becomes, such as a massive missile-firing tank or a tractor-beam-equipped flying saucer.

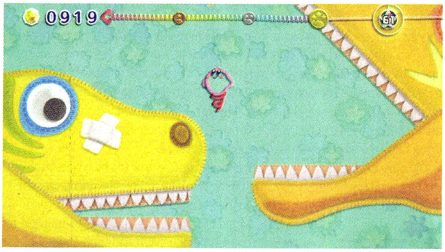
Of course, a tank and a flying saucer aren't necessarily the best suited to the terrain in Hot Land, so it's a good thing two new super transformations are introduced. The first, which debuts in the Pyramid Sands level, is an off-road vehicle. You hold 1 to accelerate and tap 2 to jump as you try to grab collectibles (such as beads and a speed-boost power-up) and defeat the dune-buggy-esque baddies. At the end of these off-roading sections, you can jump on the winners' podium and snag a wealth of beads as your reward (you can also dispatch the two opponents standing next to you). Additionally, at the end of the











level you earn a patch that you can use on the Hot Land hub area. (You receive a similar patch after finishing each level.) Once you beat Pyramid Sands, for instance, you acquire a Magic Lamp patch. By throwing the patch, you summon a huge genie who opens up the doorway to the next level, Lava Landing.

As the name implies, Lava Landing is extremely hot, so Kirby will need a super transformation that can cool things down—a fire engine. You move via the Control Pad, jump with 2, and spray water with 1, directing your stream by tilting the remote. The fire-engine portion of Lava Landing gives you just a taste of dousing fires; the Temper Temple level—which is the first of two levels unlocked after you defeat Hot Land's boss, a giant flaming-winged bird named Hot Wings—is a platforming-heavy stage that is entirely fire-engine-centric. (The second of the two stages is off-roading-focused.)

MAKING TRACKS

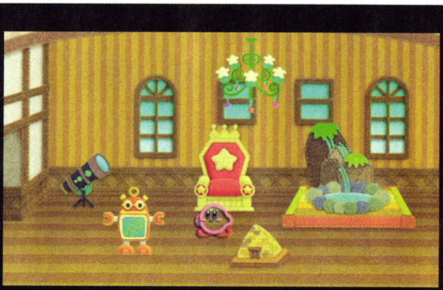
Once you have defeated Hot Wings and used the magic yarn to tie the next slice of land onto the globe, you can progress to Treat Land, which is filled with enormous toys, mushrooms, sweets, and musical instruments (all retaining the textile aesthetics, of course). Many of the Treat Land levels require sharp platforming skills as you traverse a variety of hazards. (However, you can never really die in this game; you just lose beads if you get hit, and the angelic Angie will rescue you if you fall into a pit.)

Naturally, there is a super transformation for Treat Land—Kirby becomes a train in the Toy Tracks stage. Unlike with many of the other super transformations, however, you do not have direct control over Kirby as a train; you have to use the Wii Remote controller's pointer and hold A to draw train tracks for him to travel upon, like in Kirby: Canvas Curse for Nintendo DS. (You can switch his direction, left or right, by tapping B, though.) This variation in control schemes provides a nice change of pace from the standard Control Pad-centric gameplay of the rest of the title.

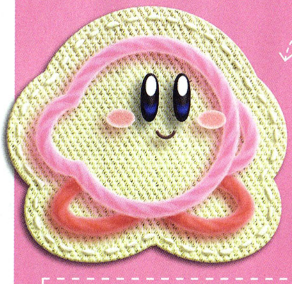
Treat Land's boss, too, provides a welcome new direction. The first two bosses of Kirby's Epic Yarn are monsters such as the dragon Fangora and the aforementioned Hot Wings. They have patterns you learn, but the Treat Land boss, Squashini, is a magician who really telegraphs his four different attacks with the gigantic slot machine in the middle of the screen. For example, if three card icons in a row pop up, that means Squashini will throw cards at you (a good thing, as you can lasso a card and throw it at the

Kirby's Pad

Although your ultimate goal is simply to get through the levels, completionists might want to keep their eyes open for the three collectibles hidden in each stage. You can find a song from a particular stage, or pieces of furniture that you can place in Kirby's apartment, giving Kirby's Epic Yarn a bit of an Animal Crossing feel. (And while you hold the Wii Remote controller NES-style for most of the game, you use the remote's pointer functionality when placing furnishings.) In addition to discoverable items, you can spend beads to purchase furniture as well as wallpaper from the nearby shops.



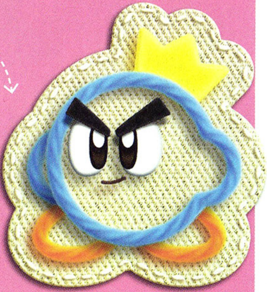
Colorful Characters



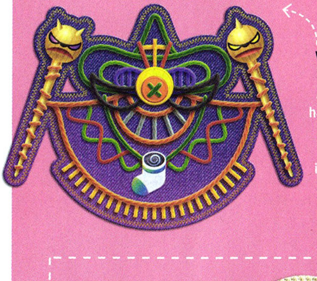
Kirby

The little pink puffball may look more adorable than ever, but his arsenal of new abilities makes him more dangerous, too.

Prince Fluff



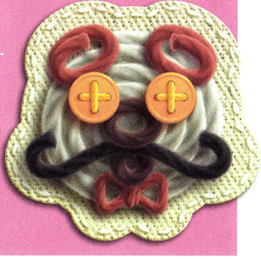
Kirby's buddy (and your partner when playing cooperatively) seems to always be in competition with the pink protagonist.



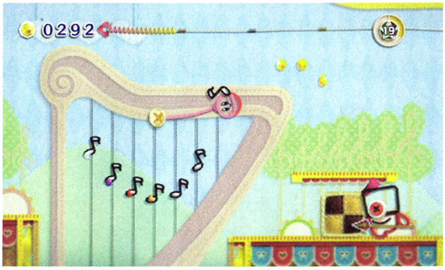
Yin-Yarn

After wreaking havoc in his own world, this evil sorcerer has invaded Dream Land, turning its citizens into yarn.

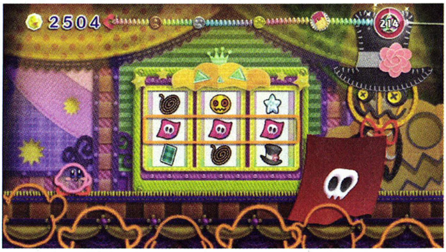
Dom Woole



Fortunately, the manager of Kirby's apartment doesn't seem to be as demanding as Animal Crossing's Tom Nook.



[Above] The variety of stages keeps things interesting. [Below] It's always helpful when a baddie lets you know what he's going to do before he does it.

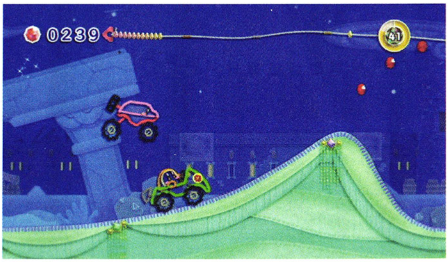


boss to stun him), whereas three rope icons in a row means you will get tied up to an explosive device (you have to mash buttons madly to break free of your bonds).

As in Grass Land and Hot Land, once the boss of Treat Land is defeated, you unlock two additional levels. In this case, the first of the two is all about the train; you must collect items, including additional cars for your train (which you cash in for beads at the end of the stage) and power-ups that give you a temporary speed burst (which can be used to smash through breakable walls). The second of the two levels feels completely different—Kirby has to make his way through a darkened haunted house, activating light switches and grabbing illuminated ghostlike enemies to see the path to the exit.

EPIC WIN?

We've played nearly half the game so far, and we are pleasantly surprised by the sheer amount of variety. Having been impressed by the game's unique visuals and having played and enjoyed both Wario Land: Shake It! and the previous Kirby games, we are certainly expecting good things from this title. Whether the rest of the game can live up to the quality we've experienced up to this point remains to be seen; we'll find out for sure when we review Kirby's Epic Yarn next issue.



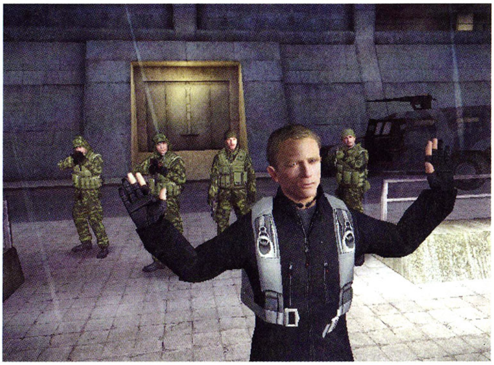
STILL GOLDEN

We look at 007 reasons to be excited for GoldenEye's Wii revival.

BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION** DEVELOPER: **EUROCOM** RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2010** **Wii**

001 FRESH PERSECTIVE



The original GoldenEye 007—developed by Rare for the Nintendo 64—was a momentous achievement that stands as one of the most influential first-person shooters of all time. A lot has changed in the 13 years since the game's release, however. So while Activision's reimagining preserves the spirit of its predecessor, it also modernizes the experience in a number of ways. That starts with 007 himself. Pierce Brosnan has been replaced by current Bond star Daniel Craig, and not only does Craig lend his voice and likeness to the character, but the game's overall tone has changed to reflect the grit and physicality he brings to the role.

To update the story for 2010, Activision tapped Bruce Feirstein, who cowrote the screenplay for the *GoldenEye* film. Most of the major plot points remain the same, but Feirstein has tweaked quite a few details and some levels take place in new settings. Bond now arrives in Severnaya *before* the GoldenEye satellite wreaks havoc there, for example, and the frigate level takes place in Dubai rather than Monaco. There's also a whole new level set in Valentin Zukovsky's nightclub, which is decidedly hipper than the one portrayed in the movie. (In other words, no Minnie Driver singing in a cowboy hat.) To fit in better with Craig's version of Bond, many of the supporting characters have evolved, as well. Take Zukovsky. The Russian crime boss is no longer a joyfully rotund source of comic relief; instead, the developers liken him to the hard-edged mobsters of the film *Eastern Promises*. These changes should serve to keep GoldenEye fans on their toes and give this reimagining a more contemporary feel.

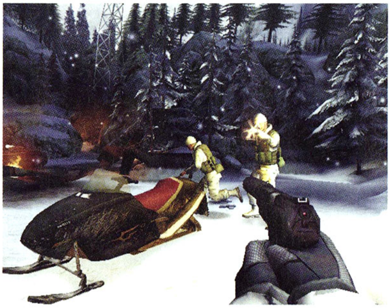
002 SILENCE OR VIOLENCE

Some heroes like to operate covertly, executing their objectives before anyone even realizes they were there. Others prefer to make a spectacle of their righteous enterprise. GoldenEye 007 accommodates both philosophies. For a stealthy approach, players can sneak up on foes and use the Subdue command to take them out quietly. Bond's means of accomplishing this task are impressively varied; he might choke out the enemy, do a little "chiropractic" work, or just ram the guy's cranium into a nearby rock. Firearms equipped with silencers also do the trick, as long as you bring down your target and any other soldiers who witness the act before they have a chance to alert their comrades.

Should the enemy become aware of your presence, you'll quickly find yourself in a full-fledged firefight. Unlike Solid Snake or Sam Fisher, though, Bond is more than capable of shooting his way through any situation. It's a good thing, too, because opposing sentries can call for reinforcements, which typically arrive in cool, cinematic ways rather than simply popping up out of nowhere as they do in most games. During one example we saw, a helicopter swooped in and backup forces rappelled from the aircraft. Another had additional troops arriving via snowmobile. It's a nice touch that makes for a more immersive and dynamic battlefield, as does a destructible cover system that keeps everyone moving.

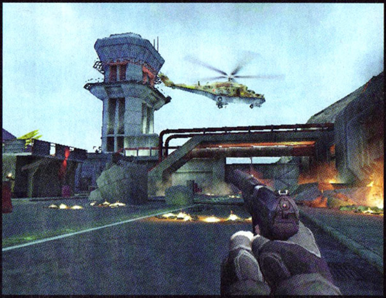
Most levels contain multiple routes, some of which lend themselves more to one approach than the other. Each stage is divided into subareas, as well, and blowing your cover in one won't carry over to the next. That means you'll have opportunities to go back and forth between the two gameplay styles over the course of a stage.

003 BLOCKBUSTER PRESENTATION



Because GoldenEye is console-exclusive to Wii, the talented folks at developer Eurocom have been able to focus all their efforts on squeezing the most out of Nintendo's hardware. The result is a pretty great-looking game that's come a long ways since its E3 debut. During our latest demo, a particularly awe-inspiring sequence unfolded after the GoldenEye satellite fired on Severnaya. The blast disabled all electronics in the vicinity, and as nearby power lines began to erupt with sparks, a pair of Russian MiGs came down in front of us, resulting in a spectacular explosion. Then, as if that call wasn't close enough, a helicopter spun out of control and crashed right on top of us, leaving us to crawl out from a pile of wreckage. Our trek through the Nigerian jungle (which replaces the original game's Cuba setting) was a bit less harrowing, but served to highlight the sorts of details that bring the game's environments to life. As we quietly snuck through the lush foliage, a thick fog occasionally obstructed our view, glowing embers wafted through the air from a nearby fire, and myriad birdcalls provided convincing ambience.

As in its last game—Dead Space: Extraction—Eurocom has also done a fantastic job with the characters' facial animations. Whatever technological wizardry the studio has stumbled upon in this field ought to be shared with the rest of the development community. Rounding out the presentation is an original score from David Arnold, who composed the music for the last five Bond films.

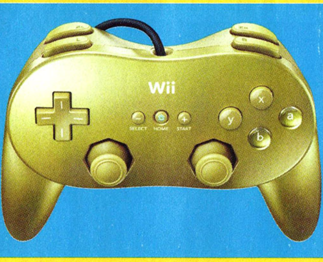


004 GUNS 'N' GADGETS

A first-person shooter is only as good as its weapons, and GoldenEye is packing plenty of firepower. The game boasts 25 different armaments, including everything from Bond's trusty Walther PPK to automatic shotguns (among our favorites), AK-47 assault rifles, rocket launchers, smoke grenades, and proximity mines. There's something for every occasion. Superb sound design ensures that each firearm conveys the appropriate oomph. (Speaking of acoustics, we love the fact that bullets make a different sound against every type of surface.)

Of course, 007 also needs his gadgets. New to the Wii game is a cell phone loaded with apps that put the iPhone's to shame. Veterans of the original GoldenEye will probably remember the drone guns—automatic turrets that could make Bond's life a living hell. With his new phone, you can now hack the guns from afar and reprogram them to target the enemy. We'll take that over some fart-maker any day!

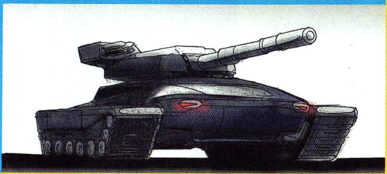
005 PLAY YOUR WAY



No matter what your preferred method of control, GoldenEye's got you covered. The game supports the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers, the Classic Controller, the Wii Zapper, and the GameCube controller. Additionally, it offers a bevy of customization options so you can tune things like turn speed, aim assist, and the size of the bounding box. We haven't had a chance to try the pointer controls yet, but the Classic Controller works like a charm. According to Activision, about half of the development team chooses to play with it or the GameCube pad, while the other half favors the Wii Remote and Nunchuk. For consumers who fall in the traditional camp, Activision will release a special bundle that comes with an exclusive gold Classic Controller Pro.

006 TANK PURSUIT

One of the most memorable scenes from the *GoldenEye* film had Bond hijacking a tank and chasing General Ourumov through the streets of St. Petersburg. Though it also appeared in the N64 game, it's realized on a much grander scale here. You have full control over the tank, which has been updated with a sleek black design and now comes armed with not only the main turret, but also a Gatling gun and heat-seeking missiles. What ensues is a level of destruction rarely seen on the Wii console. You'll shoot down gunships, smash through barricades, and flatten trucks. Enemy planes will bomb the roads in front of you, requiring some evasive maneuvers to avoid the resulting craters. At one point during our demo, the carnage even extended to a massive skyscraper on the horizon, causing it to slowly crumble before eventually falling against another big building. Unfortunately, Activision isn't ready to reveal screens from this level just yet, but trust us—it's impressive stuff.



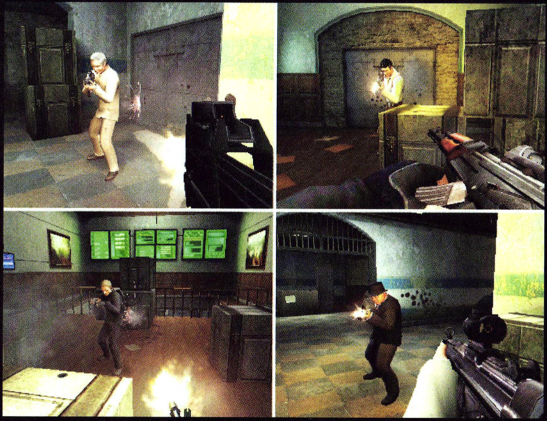
007 MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

As good as the single-player campaign was in the original GoldenEye, the game's real calling card was its wildly addictive multiplayer component. The Wii title will attempt to recapture that magic with a robust four-player split-screen offering, as well as online support for up to eight combatants. A selection of 10 maps mixes remodeled classics with all-new destinations, and players will be able to choose from more than 40 different characters, including legendary Bond villains Rosa Klebb, Dr. No, Scaramanga, Red Grant, Jaws, Ernst Blofeld, Baron Samedi, and Oddjob (whose trademark hat you can indeed throw).

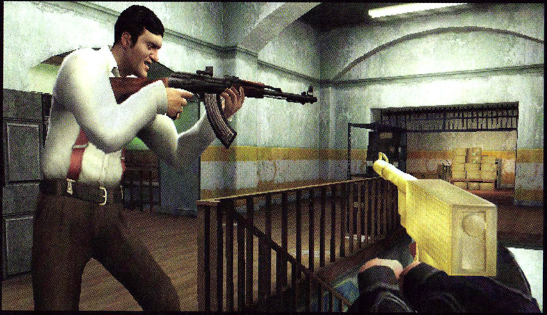
Game modes range from standard fare like free-for-all and team play to the return of the N64 favorite, Golden Gun. For split-screen matchups, you can also shake things up with 17 different modifiers. Among them: Nick Nack (named for Scaramanga's diminutive assistant), which shrinks everyone to about three feet tall; Rubber Grenades, which is exactly what it sounds like; and Revenge, which temporarily boosts the damage you can inflict after you respawn.

The modifiers aren't available during online play, but you will have access to additional modes. In GoldenEye Control, for example, two teams vie for control of the titular satellite to set off an EMP attack on the enemy base. There's also an online-exclusive XP system that unlocks new weapons, gadgets, and spy perks. Players will be able to affiliate themselves with online teams like MI6, Janus, and the Russian military, and best of all, you can join matches with or without friend codes.

We've yet to take the online portion for a test drive, but we had a blast shooting it out over a few rounds of split-screen play. The level designs seem to strike a good balance: they're small enough to let you find the action quickly, yet they still offer some strategic opportunities (as well as a few hiding spots for the more cowardly participants). If the online play works as advertised, perhaps this version of GoldenEye will have the same incredible staying power as its predecessor.



[Above] Dr. No, Jaws, *and* Oddjob? Now this is a Bond film we'd like to see. [Below] When you've got the Golden Gun, your opponent's stature ceases to matter.



Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
May 2, 1971

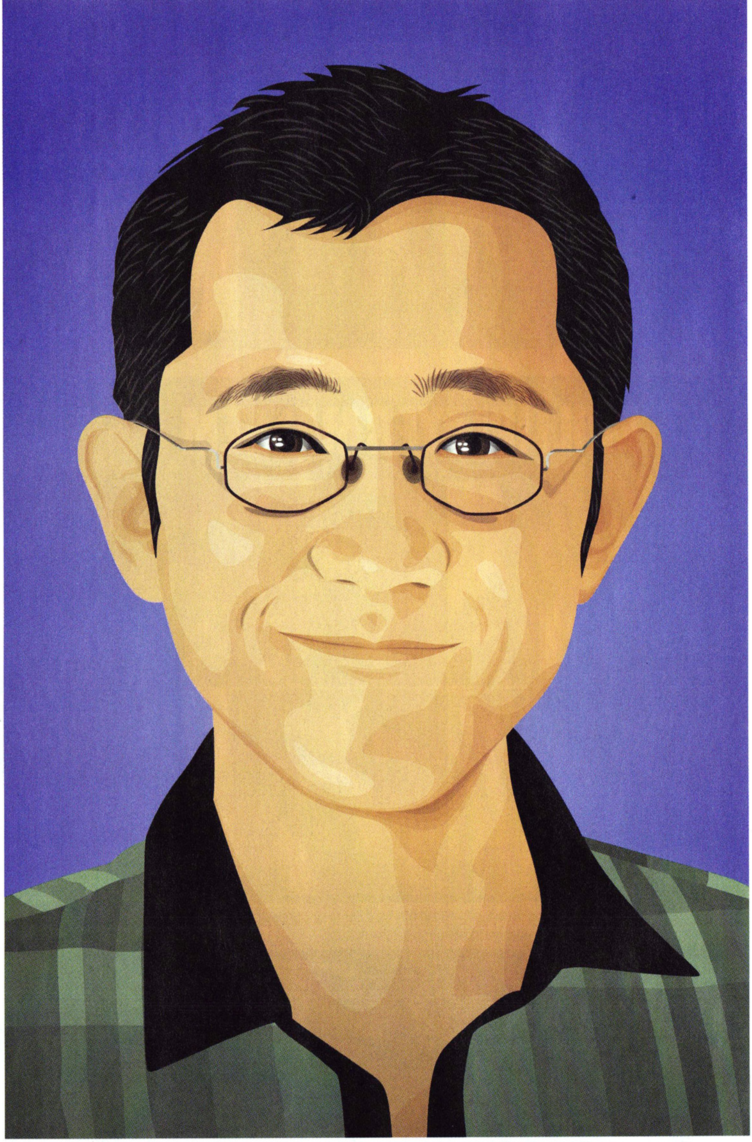
BIRTHPLACE
Saitama Prefecture, Japan

POSITION
Director, R&D Strategic Planning department, Capcom

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating Ace Attorney, being an international man of mystery

FAVORITE FOOD
Sushi, tempura, real American hamburgers

CURRENT PROJECTS
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective



Shu Takumi

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

A

A few years ago the idea of a lawyer game was pretty much inconceivable. After all, who'd want to play a game as some stodgy legal professional? But Capcom's Shu Takumi not only made such a game a reality with Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney; he made it into an intriguing, fun-filled series that's become a cult hit worldwide. An avid mystery fan, Takumi has redefined the graphic-text adventure genre and created one of the most noteworthy new franchises to come out of Japan in recent memory. And Takumi is far from finished; he's currently hard at work bringing his all-new point-and-click Nintendo DS game, Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective, to North America. No matter what title Takumi is working on, memorable characters and puzzling situations are guaranteed to be involved.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you originally get into the video game business?**

SHU TAKUMI Originally I wanted to be an author and was thinking of going around to publishers, because ever since junior high I've really been into mystery novels and mystery stories. I wanted to write mysteries, but sadly didn't have the courage to go through with the entire plan. But I was introduced to games and, at the time when I entered the game industry, there weren't that many good mystery games. I realized that...it might be a good medium to convey a mystery story.

How did you end up in your current position at Capcom?

Originally I entered the company as a planner... and then with Shinji Mikami I was making Dino Crisis [and Dino Crisis 2]. So after that, Mr. Mikami was like, "Well, why don't you make something you want to make this time?" And so they let me make the first Ace Attorney game. I really just put everything into it and everything took off from there.

What do you like about mysteries?

[I love] the element of surprise and the element of turning everything on its head at the very end—that last moment where the detective or the main character reveals everything. At the beginning of the story you kind of see it from either the culprit's point of view or you see the mystery building up, but you don't really get to see everything, so at the very end you finally have that turnabout, like with the Ace Attorney series.

Why did you want to make a game about an attorney in the first place?

Actually, at the very beginning, the concept was not to make a lawyer game. It was about making a mystery game. Up to that point in time when they were making text adventure games and graphic-novel adventure games in Japan, it was mostly [about reading] a bunch of text—picking between two or three choices—and I felt it wasn't very challenging. You didn't really use your brain when you're playing these games. So I was thinking, "Well, why don't we have little bits of testimony and have things you have to match it up with or things you have to use to figure out something?" Starting from this concept of trying to figure things out for yourself, I thought about, "What kind of job could this main character have?" Well, you know, it couldn't be just a plain old detective; that's kind of boring. I thought about it and was like, "You know, a lawyer might be kind of nice."

Where'd the spirit-medium concept come from?

There are actually two reasons. The first is because when I envisioned the characters around Phoenix and his office, I imagined him having a boss and an assistant. However, my boss at the time, Shinji Mikami, said, "That's too many supporting characters. I want you to get rid of one of them." But I didn't want to comply, so I came up with the idea of a spirit medium as a way to have both characters appear in the game through just one. The second reason is related to the first in that by having a spirit medium, I could create that shocking scene with Phoenix's mentor in the game.

Who is your favorite minor supporting character in the series?

I like Max Galactica from the second game, and I like Luke Atmey from the third game, because they're kind of eccentric. I like those kind of weird, wacky characters.

Whenever I play the third Ace Attorney game and see Godot, I want coffee! Was that your intent? And why is Godot a coffee drinker?

That may or may not have been intentional about making you want to drink coffee! The same thing with Ghost Trick...the characters talk about eating chicken a lot, so you might end up feeling like you want to eat chicken! The funny thing about Godot is that originally he was supposed to be this hard-boiled detective character, so instead of coffee, it was supposed to be bourbon! He was supposed to get glasses of bourbon slid across the bar to him, kind of like that old saloon image.

What inspired the art style of Ghost Trick?

I really wanted to make something that was different from Ace Attorney. I wanted to take something in a completely different direction this time. Making a mystery game was still at the heart of it.

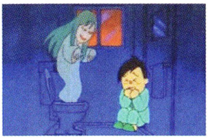
Ghost Trick just came out in Japan, right? What do you think of the reception the game has received so far?

The fan reaction has been really, really positive and really, really good. A lot of people give us comments and feedback and they say, "I didn't mean to, but I kind of cleared the whole

> *"...at the very beginning, the concept was not to make a lawyer game."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

Takumi worked at Capcom as a planner—someone who turns the director's ideas into in-game reality—before receiving free rein to design his own titles. Despite creating Ace Attorney, he had minimal involvement with the two most recent Nintendo DS games.



GAKKOU NO KOWAI UWASA: HANAKO-SAN GA KITA!!
1995, SEGA SATURN
PLANNER

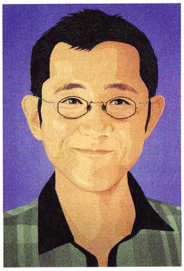
DINO CRISIS
1999, PLAYSTATION
PLANNER, EVENT DIRECTOR

DINO CRISIS 2
2000, PLAYSTATION
DIRECTOR

Phoenix
That was the sound you heard!

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY
2005, NINTENDO DS
CONCEPT, SCRIPT, DIRECTOR

Power Profiles



thing in one sitting!" You know, that kind of thing.

What would happen if Ace Attorney's Maya Fey channeled Ghost Trick's Sissel?
If she channeled Sissel? [Makes a gesture to indicate big, pointy hair.] Hmm, that would be kind of interesting. [Laughs] Up to this point in the games, actually, we've never made Maya channel a male character because that would just seem kind of weird. We wouldn't know what to do, necessarily, with the design!

How do you balance the serious elements and the comedic elements within your games?
Well, the balancing act is more about personal taste. Obviously, I really like mysteries, right? But I also like a laugh. For me, the feeling that I get from a big reveal [in a] mystery—it's the same thing with a good laugh. You kind of get that nice moment where it's just kind of unexpected and you're like, "Oh my god, that's really funny!"

You've focused mostly on handheld systems in the last decade. Do you have any thoughts on the Nintendo 3DS?
I actually liked the Virtual Boy, too, back in the day, so I'm kind of intrigued and interested by the whole 3D aspect. I'm really looking forward to that. And I'm kind of looking at Nintendo 3DS as a possible platform for a new mystery. I'm kind of thinking about new ideas about how to use 3D in creating new mysteries.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
One of the things I feel has changed for the industry is that it's so much harder to get new IPs out nowadays. A lot of companies make sequels because they are not as risky to make, because they're established IPs by the time you make the second or third game. But it's just so hard to get the word out to people to say, "Hey, try my game! There's a new game, but give it a chance!" Because game companies don't want to necessarily take the risk, and users don't necessarily want to take that risk.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
One of the things that I really, really like about creating games is the feeling of the "a-ha!" moment. Because you're working as a team, and so it's a nice feeling sometimes [when] you're working together and then someone comes up with a great idea and you just kind of all come together on that idea, or you come up with something. So just like earlier we were mentioning with mysteries how there's that moment where you reveal everything and I feel a great satisfaction from that—it's kind of the same thing.

> *"Obviously, I really like mysteries, right? But I also like a laugh."*

When you are stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
The first thing about solving problems is to not show you have a problem. As a director, you can't let your team down. You can't show on the outside you've got this huge problem. But especially with something like a new title, it's tough to make the perfect game in just one go. Obviously you're going to have to work through a couple of different things. But one of the important things for me is to try to get through that first big failure, so to speak, at the very beginning. Get through that, then hit on a good idea and work from there.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I basically have three games that I really like. Myst is one of them. I like it because there are really no words in it; it's just purely visual and what you imagine. I really like the fact that you can go around on this island and solve all the puzzles yourself, and eventually you come to the conclusions yourself. Similarly, back in the Super Nintendo days there was a game called Out of this World. Again, I'm really impressed by the fact that there are no words in it, but you get a real sense of the story. There's a real scenario behind the plot of the game. The third game, in terms of more-recent games and a Japanese game, is Ico.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
Ever since I was young, classic American and European mysteries such as Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown, and Ellery Queen have been the backbone of what I enjoy and of my storytelling. Something else that greatly influenced me as a young boy were the 45 episodes of the 1970s American TV show *Columbo*. As for more-recent media, I really love and enjoy Christopher Nolan's movies.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
I'd have to say my favorite pastime is performing and practicing stage magic! I also like music, so I often spend my spare time playing my guitar and singing, or composing music on my computer with my MIDI sequencer.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
If I had a power, I'd like the ability to stop time. If I could stop time, then I could have more time to sit and think about stuff! I could take my time writing!

GAMEOGRAPHY

von Karma
It was a battle today in court, wasn't it... Mr. Phoenix Wright!?

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY JUSTICE FOR ALL
2007, NINTENDO DS
CONCEPT, SCRIPT, DIRECTOR

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS
2007, NINTENDO DS
CONCEPT, SCRIPT, DIRECTOR

My name's Ema, Ema Skye. I'm a scientific investigator.

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY
2010, WIIWARE
CONCEPT, SCRIPT, DIRECTOR

So... what? Now I'm a crossing gate...?

GHOST TRICK: PHANTOM DETECTIVE
2011, NINTENDO DS
DIRECTOR

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REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

Has EA Sports succeeded in putting the *boom* back in NBA Jam's *shakalaka*?

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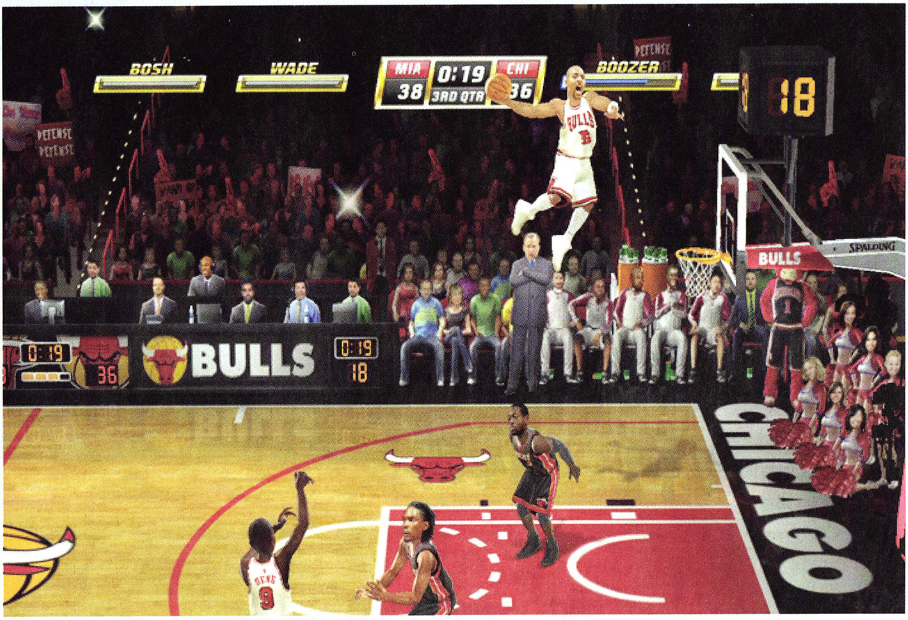


Supreme Court

NBA JAM

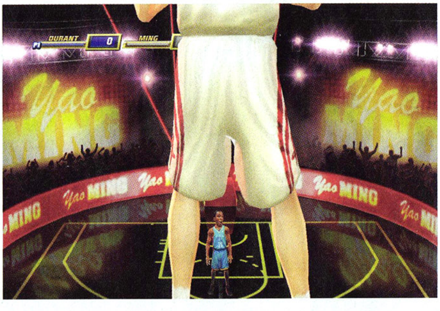
RATING: 9.0

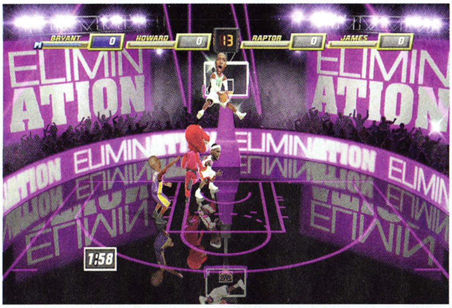
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

They did it. The folks at EA Canada have helped NBA Jam pull off one of the greatest comebacks in video game history. After other development studios spent more than a decade dishing up one air ball after another, this team has delivered a backboard-shattering dunk with a game that surpasses even its legendary progenitor.

How did they achieve such a remarkable feat? First and foremost, by staying true to the original spirit of the franchise. This is a two-on-two, arcade-style baller that's about as far removed from authentic simulation as possible. It distills basketball to its purest essence then turns the volume up to 11. Even if you know nothing about the sport, you can jump in and have fun right away. (Which isn't to say the game lacks depth, but more on that in a bit.) With assistance from series creator Mark Turmell, the dev team identified all of the little details that made the first game click. The result is something that instantly feels right to anyone who pumped quarters into Midway's 1993 arcade cabinet.

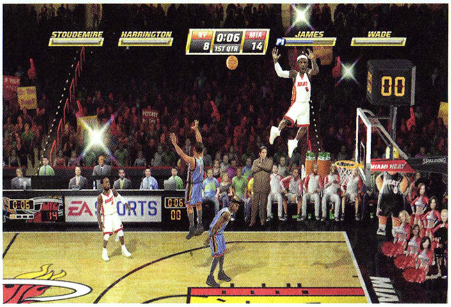
With that crucial foundation in place, all of the new stuff is free to shine. And shine it does. Case in point: the motion controls. NBA Jam is compatible with the Classic Controller, but this is one instance in which I'd encourage everyone to play with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers. Gestures are limited to an upward swipe for jumping and a downward flick for finishing your dunk, shot, or block. They're simple, intuitive, and, most importantly, they provide your over-the-top moves with a visceral exclamation point that button presses just can't match. More developers could stand to follow EA Canada's example here. The studio resisted the





[Above] Some of the modes in Remix Tour feature a half-court perspective. Also, note that even Kobe, LeBron, and a velociraptor are no match for Dwight Howard.

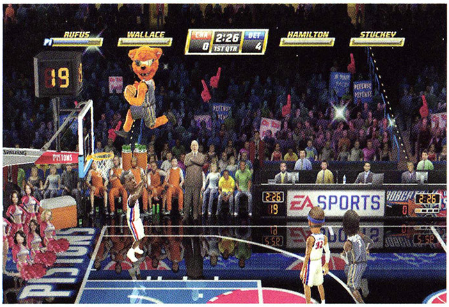
MILWAUKEE BUCKS



DURANT
WESTBROOK
0:44
ROY
ALDRIDGE
20
TRAIL BLAZERS

temptation to go crazy with motion controls and utilized them only in ways that truly enhance the experience.

Similarly clever thinking went into NBA Jam's phenomenal presentation. The game combines polygonal 3D bodies with 2D heads clipped from high-res photographs. It's an inspired and intentionally hilarious choice that evokes its predecessor's unique aesthetic while updating it for 2010. To get the full effect, you'll definitely want to turn on Big Head mode, which is unlocked as soon as you complete the game's tutorial. Player animations impress, as well, highlighted by a wide array of spectacular dunks.

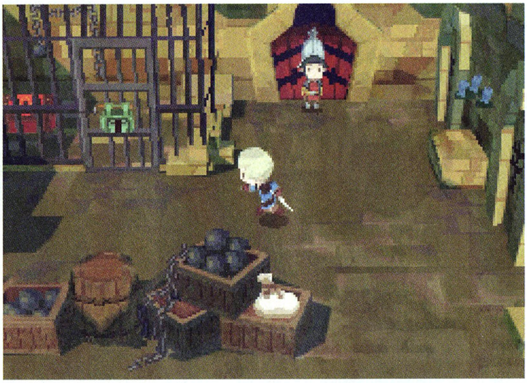


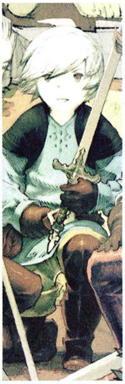
To complete the razzle-dazzle, comparable effort went into the venues. Spectators pack each arena, the hardwood looks nice and glossy, and all of the colors just pop. It all adds up to one of the most visually appealing sports games on Wii or any other console, polygon counts be damned.

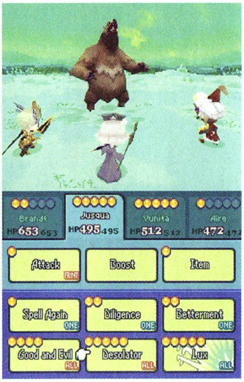
Lending his distinct vocal stylings to the action is Mr. Boom Shaka-laka himself, Tim Kitzrow. The famed commentator brings the same infectious energy that made his work on the original game so memorable, and some of the new one-liners are laugh-out-loud funny. I'm not as enthusiastic about the music, which is generic at best and grating at worst. Fortunately, you always have the option to turn it off.

For all its sizzle, NBA Jam also offers a surprising amount of substance. The game has that instant arcade accessibility, but beneath the surface lies a whole other layer of depth. I was still learning new tricks after 30 or 40 contests, and there's real strategy involved in selecting the right personnel matchups (and knowing how to take full advantage of them). What's more, the disc is packed with an extraordinary amount of content, headlined by two separate campaign modes. Classic Campaign recalls the original arcade game and simply tasks you with defeating all 29 other teams (plus a few legendary pairings). Remix Tour, on the other hand, adds a few twists to the Jam formula, including power-ups, new objectives, and even boss battles. Not all of these ideas are winners, but enough succeed to offer a nice change of pace from the traditional contests. (I'm particularly fond of Smash, wherein your goal is to shatter the opposing team's backboard by chipping away at its "health" meter with dunks and alley-oops.) An achievement system spans all of the different modes, and as you complete certain challenges, you'll unlock tons of secret characters. These range from household names like Larry Bird and Dr. J to more-obscure favorites like Detlef Schrempf and Larry "Grandmama" Johnson. Some of our elected officials even get in on the action.

Of course, Jam is still at its addictive best when you get four players together for a simple pick-up game. The lack of online play is disappointing and inexcusable, but that hasn't prevented the NP staff's productivity from taking a nosedive since the game arrived at our offices. In fact, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to cut this review short to remind these jerkstores who rules the court. **—STEVE T.**







Heroes of a Lost Age

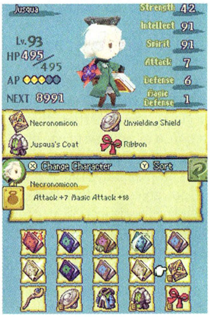
FINAL FANTASY: THE 4 HEROES OF LIGHT

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **MATRIX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

"Retro" has been a popular trend in the RPG genre lately, with many recent Nintendo DS titles taking heavy inspiration from NES-era releases. But no modern developer has made a game that feels quite so retro as Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light. Although its graphics are pleasantly modern, nearly every other aspect of the game feels straight out of 1990. That includes a focus on gameplay over story, thin but charming characters, a lumpy difficulty curve, strict inventory limitations, and a lack of guidance that makes a puzzle out of each step of the journey. Are these infuriating throwbacks to a more primitive era, or nostalgic callbacks to the golden age of the genre? The answer depends on your perspective, and probably your age.

There are a few things that we can all agree on. The 4 Heroes of Light (T4HoL) is a lovely game, with a unique visual style evocative of pop-up books. Towns and other overworld areas are colorful and imaginative, although that level of creativity doesn't manage to permeate the drab caves and dungeons. The party characters are adorable, and can clearly be seen wielding the equipment you give them and the "crowns" that determine their class. Speaking of crowns, certainly we also can agree that the crown system is an interesting take on the Final Fantasy series's traditional job concept, and that the huge variety of selectable jobs adds a lot of depth to what would otherwise be an overly simplistic combat system. I particularly appreciate how the game strays from the standard RPG class templates to find powerful and interesting abilities in boring-sounding jobs like Salve-Maker and Scholar. Finally, I'm sure we can all appreciate the game's soundtrack, which uses simple, memorable melodies that are reminiscent of NES-era chiptune music, but with much crisper audio quality.



That brings us back to the more controversial aspects of the game design. Foremost among them is how little guidance the game provides to players. T4HoL does away with modern conveniences like quest logs and event scenes in which party members explicitly discuss their next objective, instead leaving you to puzzle out each step of your journey by speaking to townsfolk, exploring your environment, and solving simple puzzles. For example, at one point in the game you'll require a specific item to progress, but no one will tell you what it is or how to get it; you better hope you were paying close attention when you saw it sitting on a store shelf a few towns ago. Of course, this is exactly the way RPGs were in the NES and SNES eras, when players valued the satisfaction of figuring things out for themselves, and weren't afraid to get stuck from time to time. It did cause me plenty of aggravation, but I ultimately found this lack of guidance to be one of my favorite aspects of the title. Younger players who grew up playing more user-friendly games may feel quite differently.

T4HoL also brings back the idea of inventory management, giving each character a strict 15 item slots in which to carry all of their equipment, spell books, and recovery items. While this does force players to make some hard strategic decisions, it also forces them to spend many tiresome hours transferring items between their characters and storage boxes. There's a reason you rarely see this mechanic in modern games—it's not fun. I wasn't thrilled with the game's story, either. I didn't miss the tangled mythologies and brooding-hero cinematics of many modern RPGs, but the characters and plot of T4HoL are so paper-thin that I never cared about what would happen next.

The team behind Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light set out to make a retro-style RPG with modern visuals, and they've done a fantastic job of it. As an older player with fond memories of early 8- and 16-bit RPGs, I found its nostalgia trip to be well worth taking. But if I were playing it without that past experience, I'm not sure how much I would appreciate its intentionally dated game design. **—CASEY L.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHICH FIVE NES GAMES WOULD YOU WANT WITH YOU IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND?

JUSTIN CHENG

Contra, Mega Man 2, Tetris, Super Mario Bros. 3, and Dragon Warrior IV. That last one should keep me occupied for a good while.

CAROLYN GUDMUNDSON

Bubble Bobble, Super Mario Bros. 3, Yoshi's Cookie, Dr. Mario, and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Mega Man 2, Contra, Zelda II, Maniac Mansion, and, of course, Super Mario Bros. I'd totally need to have my NES Max controller, as well!

CASEY LOE

The Guardian Legend, Faxanadu, Journey to Silius, Clash at Demonhead, and The Magic of Scheherazade—all the cult classics I missed the first time around!

RANDY NELSON

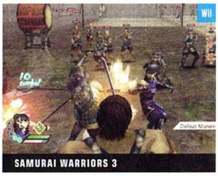
Super Mario Bros., Super Marios Bros. 2, Super Mario Bros. 3, Metroid, and Mega Man 2.

CHRIS SLATE

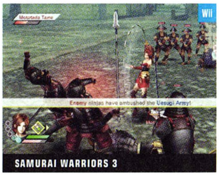
Donkey Kong Classics (collecting Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Jr.), the Super Mario Bros./Duck Hunt/World Class Track Meet combo cartridge, Super Spike V'Ball/World Cup Soccer, The Legend of Zelda (two quests for the price of one!), and, er, Tetris. That's like having *ten* games—ha! Don't send the rescue boat for a month or two.

STEVE THOMASON

Super Mario Bros., Super Mario Bros. 3, The Legend of Zelda, Mega Man 2, and Baseball Stars. All classics that are still fun today.



SAMURAI WARRIORS 3



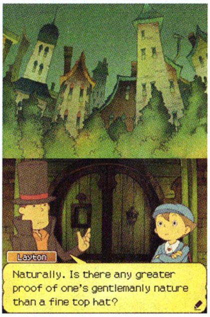
SAMURAI WARRIORS 3

SAMURAI WARRIORS 3

RATING: 6.0

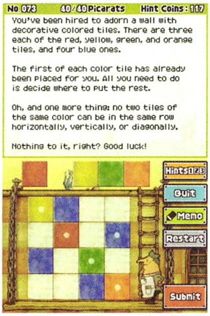
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **OMEGA FORCE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

After nearly countless Samurai/Dynasty Warriors games, you should know what to expect from Samurai Warriors 3: you are a one-man army who can easily dispatch thousands of enemies. If you liked the previous entries in the Omega Force–developed franchise, you'll probably like this one; if not, this title won't do anything to change your mind. Personally, I have to admit that I felt like a badass as I hacked and slashed through feudal Japan in Samurai Warriors 3. Unfortunately, the feeling didn't last long; I'd had my fill of destruction after an hour or two. But I did find myself continuing to play despite this. What kept me going was not the story (I had a somewhat difficult time keeping track of the various players involved in the Warring States period), but rather my desire to level up my custom character and acquire new loot. Playing with a buddy cooperatively also helped offset the overall feeling of monotony, although it's a shame that you can go online only in the Murasame Castle mode; even with its online co-op and fantastical story inspired by an old-school Famicom game, that mode can be more frustrating than compelling. **—JUSTIN C.**



Layton

Naturally. Is there any greater proof of one's gentlemanly nature than a fine top hat?



No. 073 40/40 Picarats Hint Coins: 117

You've been hired to adorn a wall with decorative colored tiles. There are three each of the red, yellow, green, and orange tiles, and four blue ones.

The first of each color tile has already been placed for you. All you need to do is decide where to put the rest.

Oh, and one more thing: no two tiles of the same color can be in the same row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Nothing to it, right? Good luck!

The Future's So Bright...

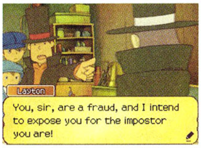
PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE UNWOUND FUTURE

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **LEVEL-5**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

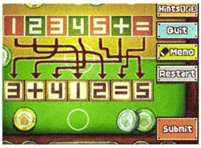
For the most part, Professor Layton and the Unwound Future is like its predecessors: a charming mix of puzzles and point-and-click exploration, augmented by excellent voice acting, top-notch cut-scenes, likeable characters, and a suitably mysterious plot. As players have come to expect from the series, the activities provide plenty of variety—everything from sliding-block puzzles to spatial-reasoning challenges to math problems to visual riddles can be found among the game's more than 160 brainteasers. A handful of puzzles feel like unfair tricks, and a few too many rely on the fact that a 9 is an upside-down 6, but most of them are good fun if you don't mind using the ol' gray matter. Optional hints, creative minigames, and neat bonus content add to the enjoyment.

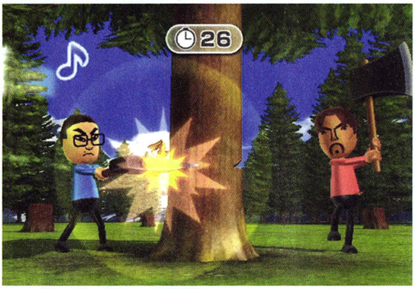
But what sets this installment apart from previous Layton titles is the story and character development. The game makes Professor Layton and Luke into human beings that you can really relate to instead of painting them as essentially brains on legs (it turns out Layton is a lover and a fighter as well as a thinker). And although some parts of the story are predictable (especially the elements that seem recycled from previous Layton games), there are some cool twists that I didn't see coming. The game even ties up the Layton/Don Paolo relationship nicely. It all culminates in one of the most satisfying endings I've experienced in a long time. I have no qualms calling this the best Professor Layton game yet. **—CHRIS H.**



Layton

You, sir, are a fraud, and I intend to expose you for the impostor you are!





Party On!

Wii PARTY

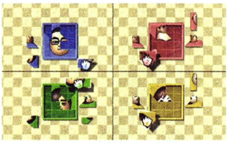
RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ND CUBE**
ESRB: **RP**

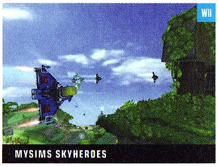
Gamers have had more than their fair share of party games on the Wii console, but few minigame collections have been as good as Wii Party. With more than 70 pick-up-and-play games, this title is bound to have something you'll like.

The minigames aren't especially deep (nor should they be, as this title is all about accessible fun) but I was entertained by the majority of them, whether I was blasting cut-out baddies on a shooting range or chopping vegetables as quickly as possible. And the different gameplay structures, such as a board-game-style contest (à la Mario Party) or a bingo variation, help keep things interesting. Not all of the minigames are winners, though; emerging victorious in ones such as Risky Rail Road—wherein you must choose a fork in the track to take in order to avoid hitting a dead end—seems to rely more on luck than skill, which can sometimes make it feel like the computer is cheating. This sense of unfairness isn't as big a problem when playing with up to three friends, however, as you're all on an even playing field.

And really, competing against human rivals is the best way to enjoy Wii Party. Sure, you can change the CPU opponents' skill levels (Beginner, Standard, Advanced, and the unlockable Expert) to give yourself the appropriate amount of challenge, but the sense of accomplishment that you get from besting the computer doesn't come close to matching the fun you have when playing against your pals. **—JUSTIN C.**

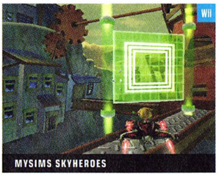


THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST



MYSIMS SKYHEROES

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST



MYSIMS SKYHEROES

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS.**
DEVELOPER: **HEADSTRONG GAMES**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Few properties seem better suited to the video game treatment than *The Lord of the Rings*, but this latest crack at J.R.R. Tolkien's seminal fantasy epic falls flat. That comes as a bit of a surprise considering Headstrong Games's solid track record with the Battalion Wars series and The House of the Dead: Overkill. And at first blush, Aragorn's Quest seems promising. The stylized, kid-friendly visuals often impress, thanks to some nice lighting and large, sweeping vistas. Even better is the music, which mixes tracks from Howard Shore's fantastic film score with original pieces that more than hold their own.

Unfortunately, the combat just isn't very intense or engaging, which is obviously a big problem when you're dealing with a straightforward hack-and-slash. Overwrought motion controls and a limited move set lead to lots of mindless waggling, and even on the highest difficulty setting, Sauron's forces rarely pose a threat. The game attempts to mix things up with the occasional interlude set in the Shire, using the conceit that Sam is telling this story to his children. You actually get to play as Frodo Gamgee, which holds a certain charm for hardcore Tolkien fans like me, but the simplistic errands that comprise these segments grow tedious pretty quickly. Not even new voiceovers from Sean Astin (Sam) and John Rhys-Davies (Gimli) can salvage this thoroughly forgettable effort.

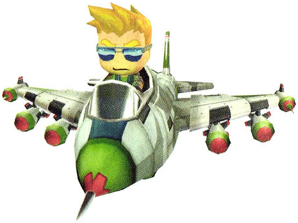
—STEVE T.

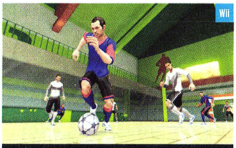
MYSIMS SKYHEROES

RATING: 7.5

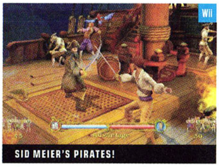
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **EA**
DEVELOPER: **EA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Don't let its saccharine looks fool you—there's a challenging air-combat game hiding underneath a thick coating of cute in MySims SkyHeroes. Mixing dogfighting, racing, and power-ups that'll have you thinking it's an airborne kart racer, the game trades realism for a snappy, action-packed flying experience. It's a fun multiplayer title that would have been better with online play, and while the MySims art style is neat-looking, there's only so much of the Simlish language you can hear before pressing mute. Still, these issues don't change the fact that MySims SkyHeroes is a fun little flier that pretty much anyone can get into and even hardcore players will enjoy. **—RANDY N.**



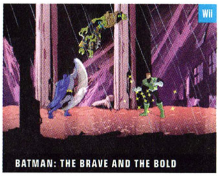


FIFA SOCCER 11



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

FIFA SOCCER 11



BATMAN: THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD

FIFA SOCCER 11

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

I've always liked the FIFA series because of its pick-up-and-play nature; sure, I may not be the most die-hard footie fan, but I can have fun playing against my friends. So it's great for people like me that EA Canada has decided to add an even more accessible five-on-five indoor- and street-soccer mode to FIFA Soccer 11. Because these playfields are much smaller than stadiums and are walled in, the action moves at a faster pace; and the addition of power-ups makes the game even more arcadey. (The power-ups can be switched off if you prefer to have a more realistic experience.) The traditional 11-on-11 soccer is as solid as ever, too, making this latest FIFA one of my favorites. **—JUSTIN C.**

SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **2K CHINA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

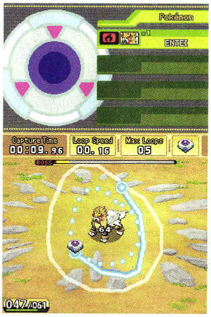
This conversion of the classic PC strategy-adventure is really unlike anything else you've played on Wii. It combines battles on the high seas, exploration of the Caribbean, fencing, treasure hunting, and even...ballroom dancing. Basically every romanticized part of a pirate's life is represented in the form of various minigames, tied together by open-world sailing. You decide which ships to battle, and whether you'll sink them or board and capture them, all with the aim of plundering, building an armada, and becoming the most revered pirate ever. There's a revenge-based story, but it's not really important. It's the variety and fun of the minigames, combined with a go-at-your-own-pace structure that makes it so appealing—and ultimately so hugely replayable. **—RANDY N.**

BATMAN: THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD: THE VIDEOGAME

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Beat-'em-ups are repetitive by nature, but Batman: The Brave and the Bold does a decent job of punching monotony in the face—at least for a little while. After all, it features a good variety of moves (punches, kicks, air combos, throws, and more) and mixes things up with multiple playable characters, an expanding array of gadgets, and fun co-op combat. The 2D visuals are gorgeous, too, and the way the story of each episode unfolds gradually across multiple stages with minimal interruption to the action is pretty brilliant. Nonetheless, the formula does wear thin after a few hours, and there's no sense of tension or reward since you have infinite lives. Also, it's too bad there's no Classic Controller support (or any control options at all), considering the old-school gameplay. **—CHRIS H.**



Faldera Island
Faldera Volcano

Pincher
Ah ha ha ha ha!

Ranger Danger

POKÉMON RANGER: GUARDIAN SIGNS

RATING: 7.0

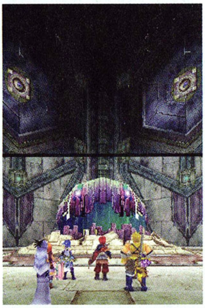
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CREATURES INC., THE POKÉMON COMPANY**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

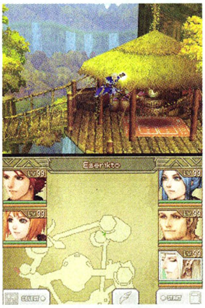
The Pokémon Pinchers are up to no good, and as one of the Oblivia region's only Pokémon Rangers, it's up to you to get to the bottom of their dastardly plans. If you've played a Pokémon Ranger game before, you're already familiar with the battle system—use your Capture Styler to draw loops around a Pokémon as fast as you can to increase its happiness rating and calm it down, all while being careful to dodge its Styler-damaging attacks. It's a fun mechanic that rewards sharp reflexes and speed, but it feels a bit too repetitive after awhile because it lacks strategic depth and dynamism as the game progresses.

Like the title suggests, a new feature called Ranger Signs makes its exciting debut—certain powerful Pokémon have a symbol you can unlock by defeating it in a Capture Styler battle, and drawing one of those symbols on the touch screen summons the affiliated Pokémon to aid you in your quest. For example, the Legendary Pokémon Raikou, Entei, and Suicune let you ride on their backs to access new areas of the map by leaping across chasms, smashing boulders, and even walking on water. It's an elegant solution to the series's past issue of not allowing you to permanently obtain Pokémon; even though you can't keep them in your party, you can now summon them any time you like.

While the core gameplay hasn't changed from previous Pokémon Ranger titles, this installment nonetheless manages to shake things up in some interesting ways, mainly through its diverse array of mission locales. From aerial battles in the clouds to underwater races in subterranean lakes, Oblivia offers a wealth of places to explore. And in a series first, up to four players can connect via local wireless to take on Wireless Multiplayer Missions. Though the battles can get a bit humdrum at times, the extra locales and features do a lot to make up for it. **—CAROLYN G.**

Pichu
Piii Chuu!



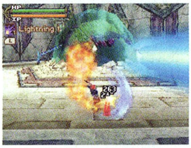


A Sinister Classic

LUFIA: CURSE OF THE SINISTRALS

RATING: 8.0

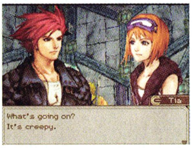
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **NEVERLAND**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**



It may be a reboot of a 15-year-old Super NES game (Lufia II: Rise of the Sinistrals), but Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals feels as fresh as ever. Swapping out the original's dated turn-based combat system for a more hands-on action-RPG approach, this snappy quest to stave off the world's impending doom stays true to the original while spicing things up on its second go-around.

When Gades, the Sinistral of Destruction, shows up with a menacing sky fortress and starts spouting rhetoric about annihilating the world, a band of heroes rises up to face him. As a young warrior named Maxim, you set out to stop the malevolent being with the help of comrades you pick up along the way.

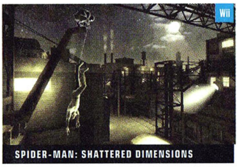
You control Maxim directly (unlike in the original), hacking away at foes and unleashing wild special moves in real time. Instantly switching between characters in your party with a tap of the touch screen is a cinch, and each character's unique special moves cleverly come into play in solving the games' puzzles.



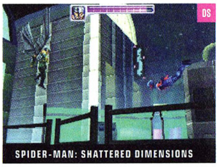
What's going on?
It's creepy.

In case the going gets too tough, there's an awesome feature to instantly beef up your entire party in five-level increments, saving major time on the grind. A new grid-like Mystic Board system also lets you improve characters by plugging in stones to power up certain attributes.

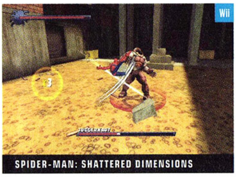
The mix of platforming, action-focused combat, and puzzle gameplay blends together smoothly with stellar visuals that push the DS hardware. Some of the puzzles are a little too trial-and-error, but otherwise the tight action and playful RPG vibe are a delight. **—NATHAN M.**



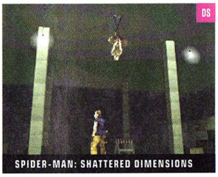
SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS



SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS



SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS



SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **BEENOX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Continuing the trend started by Batman: Arkham Asylum for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions offers up an adventure that is not tied to a film or television show and has appeal for a wide spectrum of Spidey fans. In addition to featuring well-known characters such as Mysterio, Deadpool, and Carnage, the game also has a cameo by Peter Porker, the Spectacular Spider-Ham. Heck, the fact that you visit four different Spider-Man universes, all of which should be familiar to longtime comic-book readers, helps illustrate how much of a love letter to the franchise this title is.

I'm glad that there are four protagonists, too. Each version of Spider-Man has a distinct personality—thanks in part to the four solid voice actors who speak some funny (albeit repetitive) lines of dialog—and each has unique gameplay elements to keep things interesting. My favorite is the stealth action of Noir Spider-Man; the other three Spider-Men rely heavily on fisticuffs, which can grow tiresome, whereas Noir Spider-Man can dispatch most foes quickly with stealth attacks. Unfortunately, some spotty context sensitivity can make things such as performing stealthy maneuvers and web-swinging (for all the Spider-Men) more annoying than they should be. Despite its issues, though, the sheer amount of Spidey goodness makes Shattered Dimensions a must-play for all fans of the ol' webslinger. **—JUSTIN C.**

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

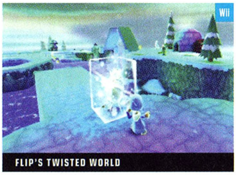
RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **GRIPTONITE GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

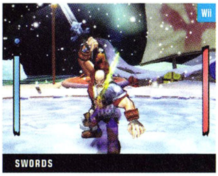
Fresh off its solid Nintendo DS version of Iron Man 2, Griptonite Games tackles Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions, with slightly better results. Shattered Dimensions lets you alternate between three distinct versions of Spidey, each with unique abilities and level designs, and the hand-to-hand combat is much more fluid than expected—you can easily disarm enemies and whip weapons back at them. Plus, the use of a Metroid-like map screen and hidden power-ups adds depth to the experience. The storyline is sillier than standard comic fare, and a frustrating and unnecessary touch-screen minigame makes moving between stages an absolute chore, but web-heads on the move will find this a worthwhile adventure. **—ANDREW H.**

FLIP'S TWISTED WORLD

LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE



FLIP'S TWISTED WORLD



SWORDS

FLIP'S TWISTED WORLD

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **FROZEN NORTH**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

In theory it's cool to see a new franchise with a neat gameplay hook coming to Wii, but ultimately it's all about execution. Flip's Twisted World is an original game that tries to look at platforming from a different angle, mainly by letting you flip the world over at any moment. When it works it gives the title's small star, a wizard in training, some intricate levels to explore. Frustratingly, though, you'll often flip the ground in the wrong way accidentally, fall to your death, and have to start over from a checkpoint. You may get used to the imprecise controls eventually, but that learning curve, plus an overall lack of polish and poor enemy design, will keep this one from graduating wizard school. **—HENRY G.**

LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **KROME STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

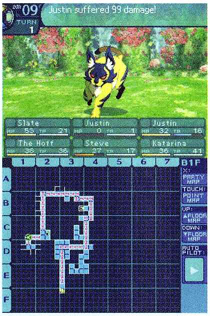
Legend of the Guardians offers a refreshing change to the stiff movements of fighter planes that most air-combat games feature. Flying around and swooping through the environment are the greatest pleasures in the game. The flight controls are simple and responsive, and the rattling camera delivers a satisfying sense of speed. Unfortunately, the joy of flying your owl can't carry you through the entire game, especially not with all its shortcomings. Legend of the Guardians suffers from aggravating slowdown that makes playing the later, more hectic levels downright terrible. Add that to the repetitive combat and the limited variety of activities throughout the game, and it drags down the experience to that of just another mediocre movie tie-in. **—DAVID M.**

SWORDS

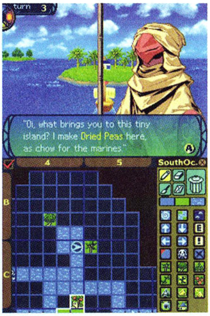
RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **PANIC BUTTON**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Swords feels like a mixture of Punch-Out!! and Swordplay from Wii Sports Resort—swinging the Wii Remote controller like a sword, you compete in eight duels that focus heavily on recognizing patterns so you can attack when your opponent's guard is down. Although the game is somewhat entertaining and challenging at first, it quickly becomes repetitive (despite offering less than two hours of play time). Additionally, the controls can be less than responsive—even when using the Wii MotionPlus accessory—making combat quite frustrating. Considering how basic Swords is, it would have been better suited to WiiWare; as a full retail release, it's disappointing. **—CODY M.**



Justin suffered 99 damage!



"Oi, what brings you to this tiny island? I make Dried Peas here, as chow for the marines."

Still Afloat

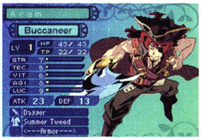
ETRIAN ODYSSEY III: THE DROWNED CITY

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ALTUS**
DEVELOPER: **ALTUS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Etrian Odyssey III isn't exactly packed with new ideas. But as Etrian Odyssey II proved, this series doesn't need much in the way of innovation to provide a thoroughly satisfying RPG experience. Like its predecessors, Etrian Odyssey III allows players to create a team of adventurers and gives them a colorful, 25-floor dungeon to explore. Players can make their own maps on touch-screen graph paper, and a steep difficulty curve adds tension, due largely to the high-level "F.O.E." monsters that roam each floor.

The monstrous bird flies past you, causing a strong gale, before



This installment features an entirely new batch of character classes that can learn scores of new and unique abilities. The option to choose a subclass makes it possible to dabble in all 10 of the initially available classes with a single five-man party, and a new weapon-customization system adds even more factors to tweak. The most creative addition is an ocean-charting minigame in which players can outfit a ship and set out to map the islands, currents, and pirate routes outside of the coastal hub town. This mode is fun, but it feels weirdly out of sync with the rest of the game, as if it were a stand-alone DSiWare title that the developers decided to throw in for free.

I was initially disappointed not to see more meaningful innovation in Etrian Odyssey III, but its compelling and polished gameplay sucked me in all the same. The new character classes are a blast to play, the steep-but-never-impossible difficulty curve is always compelling, and the handful of new elements add just enough variety to keep the long dungeon crawls from going stale. **—CASEY L.**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

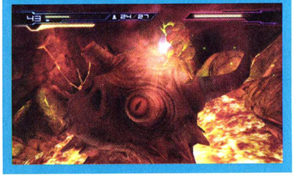
Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guilty Party	7.0	Disney	259	E
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Gunblade NY & LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	5.5	Sega	259	T
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.5	XSEED	259	E
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros.	257	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Metroid: Other M	8.5	Nintendo	259	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
NHL Slapshot	6.0	Electronic Arts	259	E
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T

MORE ON:

METROID: OTHER M

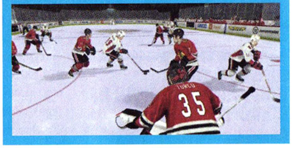
I started to replay Metroid: Other M as soon as I beat it, so the game has monopolized my whole month. It's been interesting to see the wide variety of reactions to the title in the press; it seems that people's opinion of Other M hinges on how much they weigh the game's varied flaws. But I don't think anyone should let a few rough spots stop them from enjoying what is easily one of the year's best action/adventure games for the Wii console. In the areas that really matter, I feel that this Metroid has just as much to offer as most of its predecessors. —**CHRIS S.**



MORE ON:

NHL 2K11

Last year's hockey effort from 2K Sports was rock-solid, and the publisher scrapped the other versions of this year's game to focus solely on the Wii installment. Yet somehow, NHL 2K11 turned out pretty mediocre. The motion controls are suspect, there are no visual enhancements to speak of, and much of the team and player data is strangely outdated. —**STEVE T.**



Trauma Team	**8.0**	Atlus	255	T
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	**4.0**	XSEED	246	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	**7.5**	THQ	248	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	**8.0**	Capcom	252	T
Again	**7.0**	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	**7.0**	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	**8.0**	NIS America	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	**5.0**	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Beat City	**8.5**	THQ	254	E
Bejeweled Twist	**8.5**	PopCap	251	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	**4.0**	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	**7.5**	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Bookworm DS	**8.5**	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	**6.0**	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	**4.0**	Ubisoft	249	T
Crime Scene	**5.0**	SouthPeak	253	M
Dawn of Heroes	**7.5**	Majesco	253	E10+
Deca Sports DS	**5.5**	Hudson	253	E
Dementium II	**8.0**	SouthPeak	255	M
Despicable Me: The Game–Minion Mayhem	**7.0**	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	**8.0**	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	**8.0**	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	**9.0**	Nintendo	257	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	**8.0**	THQ	248	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	**4.0**	Aspyr	248	T
Fossil Fighters	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E
Glory of Heracles	**7.0**	Nintendo	251	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	**6.0**	Natsume	258	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	**7.0**	Natsume	248	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	**7.0**	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	**4.0**	505	246	E10+
Infinite Space	**8.0**	Sega	253	T
Iron Man 2	**6.5**	Sega	256	E10+
Ivy the Kiwi?	**7.0**	XSEED	259	E
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	**9.0**	Square Enix	247	E10+
The Last Airbender	**7.5**	THQ	257	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	**9.5**	Nintendo	250	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	**5.0**	LucasArts	249	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	**9.5**	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	**8.0**	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	**9.0**	Capcom	256	E
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	**8.5**	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	**6.0**	Eidos	247	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	**7.0**	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	**7.0**	Ignition	248	E10+
Phantasy Star 0	**8.0**	Sega	248	E10+
Picross 3D	**7.5**	Nintendo	255	E
Pokémon HeartGold Version	**9.5**	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	**8.0**	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	**9.5**	Nintendo	253	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	**7.5**	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	**7.0**	Ubisoft	249	E
Ragnarok DS	**5.0**	XSEED	252	E10+
River City Soccer Hooligans	**7.0**	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	**6.0**	Aksys	258	T
Rooms: The Main Building	**7.0**	Hudson	253	E
Sands of Destruction	**7.0**	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	**9.0**	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	**8.0**	Atlus	253	M
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	**6.0**	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	**7.0**	Sega	253	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	**8.0**	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	247	E
Squishy Tank	**8.0**	Natsume	253	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	**5.5**	LucasArts	249	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	**4.5**	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tetris Party Deluxe	**8.5**	Majesco	256	E
Transformers: War for Cybertron	**7.0**	Activision	258	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	**8.5**	Nintendo	253	E
WireWay	**6.5**	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	**4.0**	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	**6.5**	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	**7.0**	THQ	248	T

MORE ON:

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE: MOBILIZED

After trying out the Nintendo DS version of Call of Duty: Black Ops, I had a hankering to play its predecessor, Mobilized. Despite the game being one of the better first-person shooters on the handheld, I found that I couldn't play Mobilized for long stretches of time, as my hands kept cramping up. —JUSTIN C.

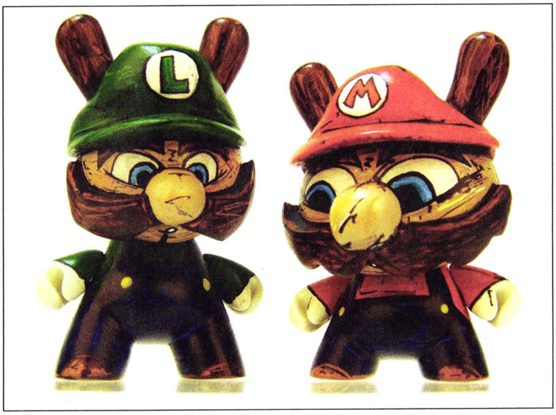
MORE ON:

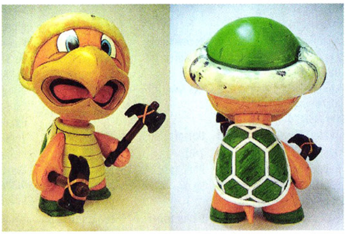
SANDS OF DESTRUCTION

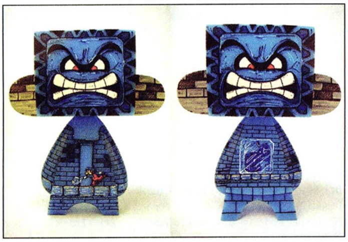
For a game that's supposed to be about the end of the world, SOD is pretty lighthearted. Perhaps too lighthearted—when the main character accidentally kills everyone in his village at the beginning of the game, I'd expect a *little* angst. Also, the voice acting is truly atrocious. On the other hand, the combo-oriented battles are fun, and the dungeon design is fantastic. —CHRIS H.

Kyrie
234/234
241/248
244/250
139/139
122/122
130/130
GOOD!
CRITICAL
Defiance
Lightning Shot
Shade Fist
Skills/Items
B Defend

COMMUNITY







FANDOM

It's-a-Custom Vinyl!

A graphic designer creates an entire show of custom Mario vinyl toys.

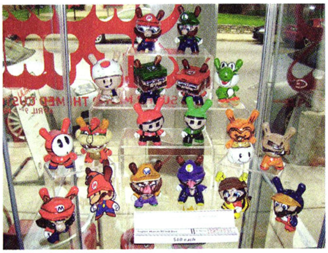
AS THE POPULARITY of custom vinyl toys—blank, presculpted figurines that can be drawn on and modified—has grown steadily in recent years, we've seen a lot of really inventive interpretations of popular Nintendo characters. But rather than design a couple of stray figurines, 28-year-old Atlanta, Georgia native Jared Cain created an entire set of toys inspired by the Mario universe, and even showcased them in his own custom-toy show.

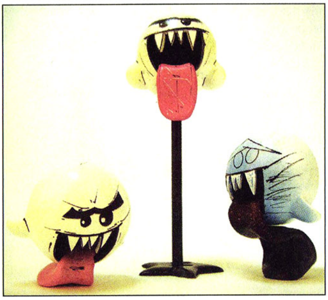
Cain says he started designing custom toys as a break from the rigors of his full-time graphic-design job: "I work almost exclusively on a computer, so as a contrasting outlet, I started sculpting and painting custom toys." He settled on the theme after playing New Super Mario Bros. Wii, which he says helped unite his family and his fiancée's during the holiday season. "It just dawned on me that I have loved [Mario games] since I was a kid," he says, "and nearly 20 years later [they have] brought a whole new family together."

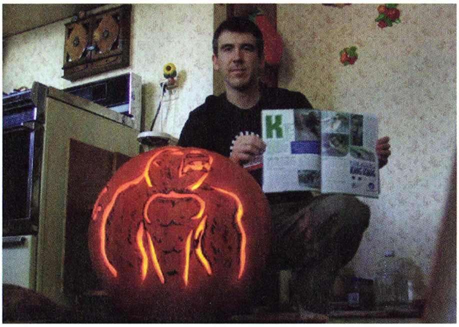
After working on the series for months, he debuted the entire line at a dedicated show at Ultra Pop, an art/design bookstore and toy shop in Louisville, Kentucky. While the series includes several unique pieces, including a giant Hammer Bro (made from an 18" Mega Munny toy) and a handful of Koopas (based on blank Labbit toys), the most striking ones may be the multiple variations of Mario and Luigi, including pixel-based and block-headed designs.

According to Cain, the show was "a huge success," drawing both local Mario fans and fans of Cain's previous custom toys. He's currently talking with Ultra Pop about hosting another show in 2011. He hasn't disclosed the theme for the second show just yet, but says he may revisit some Nintendo characters that didn't make it into the first showcase. —**ANDREW H.**

[Below] We wouldn't mind having some of these standing on the shelves in our office.







FANDOM

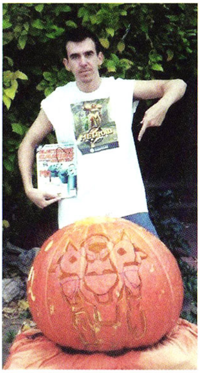
Mari-O-Lantern

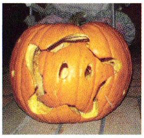
Halloween is a chance for one fan to celebrate his favorite company's games.

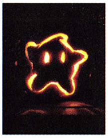
WE SPOTLIGHTED reader Paul Gale's immense devotion to Ryu from Street Fighter in the Pulse section of Vol. 232, and now—just in time for Halloween this year—he's sent us a look at 12 years' worth of Nintendo-inspired jack-o-lanterns.

The 27-year-old Los Angeles resident started carving jack-o-lanterns based on Nintendo characters and games back in 1998, and has continued the tradition each and every year, etching themes based on Bowser, Metroid Prime, the Wii console, and last year's New Super Mario Bros. into pumpkins. "I try and specifically pick a game [or] system that I'm personally really looking forward to and that's also coming out around the time of Halloween, so that I help boost up its popularity," Gale tells us.

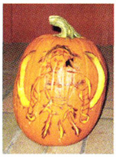
For this year's project, he plans to carve the characters of Donkey Kong Country Returns for Wii into a homegrown pumpkin, and claims he hopes to "create the world's first laser-cut pumpkin." Any combination of lasers, pumpkins, and Donkey Kong sounds great to us! You can find footage of Gale's pumpkin creations—including promised pictures and video clips of this year's design—at his website, www.paulgalenetwork.com. **—ANDREW H.**

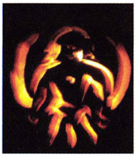






Twelve years' worth of Nintendo-themed pumpkins shows real dedication. We can't wait to see what Paul Gale carves next!





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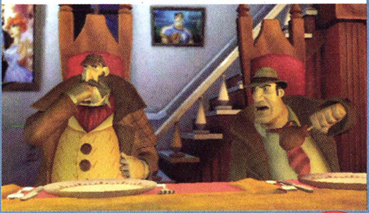
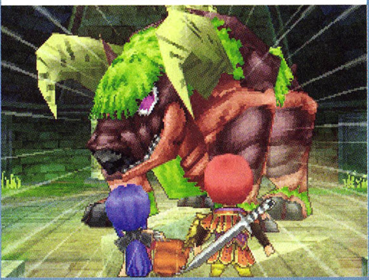
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



You realize that this chicken is supposed to be finger-*lickin'* good, not finger-*eatin'* good, right?

Here's our caption.
THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 258'S SHOT



"I swear they're getting too crazy with the chia pets." **—BRANDON C.**

"Little did Harold the Bull know that he would meet two warriors with hair dye almost as vibrant as his, and that a wonderful friendship would begin." **—LOGAN R.**

"No, dude, I'm pretty sure it's *your* turn to shave the yak." **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

"Wow, I never knew that Ganon would look so stunning in red." **—FISHERSPOT**

"Magical triangles nor balls of fire were an option for these heroes to defeat this Bowser-Ganon fusion." **—JACKOFSPADESMAN**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

DECEMBER 2010 VOL. 261

NEXT MONTH

In just 30 days we'll take a return trip to Donkey Kong Island and go deeper into the jungle than ever before. We'll also have exciting new looks at top WiiWare titles, reviews of big Wii games like Kirby's Epic Yarn and Rock Band 3, and much more. So be sure to swing by, and be ready for more fun than a barrel of, well, you know.

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